The Art of Making a Game

ANALYZING AND MANAGING THE CREATIVE PROCESS
Behind (Board) Game Development

by Katriina Heljakka
"Whoever plays a game, does it from his freedom of choice. [...] Playing games is not work, not commitment, nothing you have to do. Therefore, we can say that playing games means being free."

(Wolfgang Krämer, German game inventor)
VISUALIZING AND
PROTOTYPING RACCOON WASH RUSH........... 49
7.1 Packaging ................................................................. 52
7.2 Game board and components........................................ 54
7.3 Rules sheet .................................................................. 55
7.4 Feedback:
Testing Raccoon Wash Rush with target audience .......... 56
7.5 Results of the play tests .................................................. 57
7.6 Conclusions: How did this game end? ....................... 58

NOTES ........................................................................... 61
BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................... 72
Internet sources ............................................................... 75
Other sources ................................................................. 76

PRESS CLIPPINGS
GRAPHS
RACCOON PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES
RACCOON IMAGES
IN CHILDREN’S BOOKS .............................................. 77

Appendix 1: Concept Document for
RACCOON WASH RUSH
Appendix 2: Rules
Appendix 3: Play Test Report (Game designers)
Appendix 4: Play Test Report (Children)
In the world of games, second best is never enough. But more than in order to win, people enjoy playing for the experience itself.

It’s time to thank the people who have supported me on this journey of discovery. First of all a big Thank You goes to the company. Without Tactic I would never have entered the fantastic world of games. Thank you Markku. You are my personal hero, just like grandpa Aarne has always been.

Thank you, international Tactic product development team. You inspire my work by always aiming at the best possible gaming experiences. A special thank you to Sonja and Jussi L for your valuable opinions and help.

Thank you Marjo, Harri, Max, Minna, Mari, Laura and Nina and all the students I have met at Pori Department of Art and Media. TaiK is truly the university of my dreams.

A thank you goes also to Judy and Eric in New York, who have proved that toys and games really are worth studying in the academic context. You are great professionals.

Last but not least: Thank you, my dear family. Ma, Jemi, Pasi and the rest of the bunch. You have reminded me about the art of living. It’s not all about work, you have to play a little once in a while too.
WHY WE ARE PLAYING AND STUDYING GAMES

Games are a universal part of the human experience, for all cultures, genders and ages. Life itself can be seen as a game, as can art. Art evokes a play of meaning in our thinking. It’s a game that is played between the artist and the viewer of the work of art. As living beings we undertake different roles. In a way we are playing pieces on the game board of life. Elements of luck and strategy whisk us around. There are rules that ought to be obeyed. There are winners and there are losers. Thus, games can be viewed as metaphors of life and art. However, this study is not a philosophical approach on playing games. Instead, it’s a study about board games and analyzing and managing the creative and artistic design process behind the creation of them. A study, which can be seen as an attempt to theoretically explain the art of making a game and on the other hand as a handbook on board game design. As such, it clarifies my personal experiences and general knowledge in the world of game design and ties these experiences with earlier academic research. [1]

To play games is one of most basic activities in human life. Play is considered to be children’s work and joy of adults. Great games give the players an opportunity of learning above and beyond being fun. They teach us to interact socially, develop language skills, mental abilities and hand-eye coordination. Playing a good game even teaches problem solving skills. Play helps us become aware of colour, form and proportion. [2] Designing games is to consider all these aspects. Ultimately, game design is play design. [3]
One of the most important aspects of games is interactive communication, in other words social intercourse. Games are used as “social lubricants”, especially by adults. Games can be seen as a semi-structured activity, usually undertaken for enjoyment, as a way of spending free time with friends and family, even alone if we speak of single-player games such as solitaire and other brain training games. Playing a game means having a common experience with your fellow players or a dialogue with yourself. Games really bring people together regardless of gender, generation and race. It means that all the players are equal and have the freedom of choice to participate in the game. All players have the same chance of winning the game. Every game demands activity from its players and immersion in the situation – that is, diving into the world of the game.

Whoever plays, leaves behind reality and dives into the world of the game. These game worlds are comparable to reality. [...] Whoever spends an interesting and fun evening playing games with friends, takes this happy feeling into reality. By crossing this small border between the real world and the game world has the result that during the game one is relaxed and can escape from the real world and then return relaxed and happy.

Although this study is mainly concerned with the design of games themselves rather than the players as will be shown later on in this chapter, the question still needs to be presented: Who are the players of board games? A player can be anyone aged 2 years and up who has the ability to perceive the game visually and understand the game play. But people play games for different reasons. Some play games purely because of their ability to entertain. However, games are also used as pedagogical, educational tools for both children and seniors.

As said, games bring people together. The activities taken in a game may nevertheless result in many different activities above and beyond the entertaining aspect. All games require at least some degree of abstract intelligence. Playing a game might even improve your motoric skills by allowing the player to challenge his or her skillfulness and reactions. Many games might also require sophistication, judgment, creativity or a combination of these. Thinking psychologically, a game may require thinking, planning, decision making, concentration, brain-training, receiving new knowledge and understanding the impact of systems. The emotional perspective includes activities such as acceptance of rules of the game, the ability to co-operate, to learn how to lose, to find out new things about yourself and others and using your fantasy and creativity. Games evoke emotions. The research in the field of digital games has brought into discussion the emotional content in games. As Leino points out; games can be concerned with themes that touch the human in the living world in ways traditional forms of art or media culture are not capable of. Usually art is the context in which people discuss the evoking of emotions. In my opinion even board games generate these emotions. By playing a board game the player very often learns new things about herself – the joyful emotions when winning, the disappointment of los-
ing and most importantly, the excitement of the gameplay itself. Games are played to be entertained through experiences, but watching someone play a game can be a form of entertainment as well, as the poker craze (worldwide phenomena started by the World Series Poker Tournaments in the USA some years back) has shown in the past years.

Fundamentally, playing games is all about experiencing them. Board games are products which deliver genuine experiences and encounters, sought by the consumers of today.[10]

1.1 WHAT IS A GAME ANYWAY?

It all starts with a question: What makes a game a game? In a game to be called a game there needs to be players, rules, a winner and a loser. Games involve players and role playing. Games involve play. Games involve competition – each game is either won or lost. Games can be played as individuals or with teams – in this case they require cooperation between teammates. Games have rules. Depending on the game idea, they involve varying degrees of skill and strategy.

According to Ellington, Addinal and Percival a game must involve overt competition between individuals or teams and secondly, a game must have rules.[11] Maroney sees a game as a form of play with goals and structure. Zimmerman’s definition is an activity with some rules engaged in for an outcome.[12] A game can also be seen as a structured or semi-structured activity, usually undertaken for enjoyment. Key components of games are goals, rules, challenge and interactivity.[13]

At its most elementary level then we can define a game as an exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrial outcome.[14]

Homo ludens, the playing human is an ideal character for a creative person. Within play one may find adventure, innovation and common rules. These are the components in (board) games as well. Today the world of “material” games (games with some kind of interface) can be divided into three categories: 1) Board games, 2) digital games (electronic games played on consoles, mobile phones and in the Internet) and 3) hybrid games (games including features of both of the previously mentioned). This writing is mainly concerned with traditional board games. What is meant with board gaming, then? There are many definitions:

A board game is played with counters or pieces that are placed on, or removed from, or moved across a “board” (a premarked surface, usually specific to that game).[15] Board games use as a central tool a board on which the players’ status, resources and progress are tracked using physical tokens. Such games often also incorporate dice and cards.[16]

The board contains all aspects of game information. The representations of players (their tokens) are all in the same “space”, making comparison of relative positions immediate and intuitive. Players can see the consequences of their actions.[17] Key components of a (board) game are goals, rules, challenge and interactivity.[18]

The board games of today can be divided in many different categories. Board games can be categorized according to their target groups, complexity, type of play (action, adventure, party, strategy...), number of players (single, multiplayer) and playing pattern (individual or cooperative). Board
Games are a wide category stretching from social party games to purely intellectual games. The balance between intellectual skill and luck vary depending on the game. There exists a wide variety of board games for all ages. Most games are gender-inclusive, but some of them are more targeted towards males or females. In the recent years young girls (so called “tweens”) have emerged as a target group of potential growth.

1.2 Games are tos, and yet not quite

The meaning of toys has already been acknowledged in Finnish cultural history in the beginning of the 20th century, more accurately in 1918, when Yrjö Hirn’s book on play and art (Leikkiä ja taidetta) was published.[19] Hirn builds a bridge between playing with toys and producing artistic meaning in his thinking. He reminds us that a complete cultural history cannot be written without including toys and games in it. Research in the area of toys helps us to learn about our ancestor’s way of living. Toys express the taste and styles of the generations of the past. According to Hirn, toys have preceded many innovations to come.[20]

Play used to be a child’s labor. Nowadays a multitude of teenagers and adults spend their free time playing different kinds of games. Toys and games have been accepted as pedagogical means in the same way as they are entertain-

Graph 1. Games, art, play and interaction are all connected. Both art and games generate interaction and play. “Material” games can be divided into three groups. This graph depicts my interest areas in this study and thus define its context.
ing playthings. Playing with toys and games help to build up a child’s personality and to develop as individuals among the environment, family and friends. The children of today have a greater need for family, as families become separated by the nature of our evolving society. There is more communication, discussion and respect between children and their parents. Also the grandparents play a growing role. Grandparents help with their grandchild’s upbringing as single, working and divorced parents become more prevalent. The enjoyment of toys and games is shared between generations.

Games are considered a category of toys. So a game is considered a toy. Still, a game is not a puzzle, as a puzzle is static. A game is interactive. So is a toy. But a game has goals, and that makes the game more, or different than a toy.

The toy business is growing year to year in importance. The French Toy Industry Federation estimated a 3% growth in the sector to happen in 2006. The game industry follows the previous areas of the entertainment industry like the film and music industries by rotating its products in different gaming platforms, other media and other branches of the industry that seem close to it such as the toy business and amusement parks.

1.3 MY RESEARCH INTEREST
Board gaming and the designing of board games is a relevant part of game culture. According to Eskelinen, games and playing them have not fully found their place in the academic field of studies. However, games have been studied academically as a part of cultural history and other areas that will be clarified in the following. Game research of the past years has been mainly concerned with the digital dimensions of games; console and computer playing. With digital games I mean games that are played with consoles, on the computer, the Internet or mobile phones. In this study I’m concentrating on traditional board games instead. “Traditional” means that these type of games are played on a board, most often one made of card board.

My personal history in games begun at the age of six when I started to run small errands in a game company started by my grandfather. The company, established in 1967...
still exists today. My position since year 2000, has been head of development and design – a creative manager responsible for new game ideas. In other words, games play indeed a very big role in my life as much today as they did in my childhood. My studies in visual culture have encouraged me to attempt to theorize my practical knowledge of the processes that lie behind the creation of a game.

My research interest lies in the creative development process of a board game: How are board games designed? What is creativity and what are innovational products? What kind of creativity is expected from a game designer? What kind of a creative process is demanded so that a board game is refined from idea to a ready made game all set for publishing? My aim is to clarify and define the process behind creating a board game both theoretically and based on my own experience and viewpoint. In the latter part of this writing I will clarify the design process of my own game idea in its various stages. This builds up the case study part of my research. As a game designer I need a way to analyze games, to try to understand what works and what makes a game interesting. The goal of this attempt is to prove that creating a board game can be seen as a similar process as an artist's creation of a work of visual art. Literally visual art, because my interest is in games that can firstly be seen with the eye and just secondly experienced with other senses.

In the recent years there has been a significant rise of interest in games considering the fields of academia and art. Games have become interesting objects of study in the same way as many other forms of popular visual culture. The theoretical body of this thesis utilizes literature about games and (mainly board) game design, Internet sources and observations made by myself during the years I have worked for a game company. Also, a small qualitative interview (narrative study) is carried out in order to stress how game industry professionals see connections between art and games. Due to the lack of and difficulties in finding theoretical academic writings of board game culture, I have decided to base this thesis mostly on general knowledge and materials concerned with games and the board game culture. Eskelinen notes that game research has been taken seriously at least three times in the history of the Western world. Ethnographs of the 1800's draw a map of the traditional games in the Asian, African and American countries. In the next wave of researchers came Johan Huizinga (1938) and Roger Caillois (1958). In 1968 Jaques Ehrmann claimed that it had finally become time to take games seriously. A development thereof was Elliot M. Avedon's and Brian Sutton-Smith's study of Western game culture in their work The Study Of Games in 1971. Also, Eskelinen reminds us that toys, games and playing have been studied in even a wider spectrum of areas; in mathematics, biology, psychology, educational sciences, sociology, history, anthropology, folk art, psychiatry and visual arts. The multidimensionality of previous game research has resulted in the difficulty of having a coherent research area today. The field of game research of today is challenging. It has been said that game designers have no well-defined set of common
terms with which to communicate with each other.[26] However, the game industry, the experience industry that exploits the game industry and the parties which use games for serious purposes need heuristic and intrinsic research to support development of new products.[27] Personally, I agree. Working in a game company myself, I have found academic game studies to enrich many game developing projects in real life.

Some game researchers of today practice *ludology* — the study of games, although there has been an academic debate whether (digital) games research is a part of media, film or even literature research. A *ludologist* is a game researcher who sees the game first and foremost just as a game that needs to be understood in terms of its rules, interface, and in terms of the concept of play. Another approach to game research is the *narrativist* one, which approaches (mainly digital) games as story-like structures.[28]

The game designers of today are almost without exception coming from the backgrounds of computing, social sciences and visual arts. In other words, there is not yet an educational program in the academic field that would purely offer studies in traditional game design meaning the design of board games. Nevertheless, there are programs which offer the following: ludology/critical game studies; games and society; digital game design; game programming; visual design; audio design; interactive storytelling; game production and the business of gaming. According to Eskelinen there will be a dispute in the future especially about in where critical game studies, game design and interactive storytelling should be placed in the field of scientific or art research.[29] Games being such a great source for academic studies, I think that there are many possibilities. Games, especially in terms of game rules and mechanisms and the evolvement of these can and should be studied in the scientific context. However, games also are objects of visual culture and should thus be considered as objects which create visual and even artistic meaning. Therefore they could not be forgotten in the realm of academic research of art.

Despite the fact that game researchers of today mostly concentrate on digital games, I think that attention should also be given to the development of board games in the context of visual culture and even visual art. Games are products of creative visual thinking like any visual objects of art. Games are based on ideas and an often complex design processes, not unlike art.

**1.4 THE METHOD OF THIS STUDY**

Game research cannot only consist of a purely theoretical approach. Therefore, as a game designer, I’m curious about the different stages of the creative design process and what innovative thinking is, which I will both study in the theoretical and practical parts of this thesis. My case study focuses on a personal game design process. As Zimmerman
says, designers learn best through the process of design – directly experiencing the things they make. This methodological approach is called iterative design and it is a cyclic process that alternates between prototyping, playtesting, evaluation and refinement.[30]

Art industrial research can be done through design, which is the chosen method for this thesis. In this case the theoretical context and the design aspect of the area of study are in constant dialogue with each other. The student is concerned with the creator-product relationship and may discuss different aspects of his or her authorship. In this method the productive part of the research is an essential element in the complete process. This perspective is also known as artistic-based research.[31]

Best argues that in the world of today, the design problem is less about sole creator or visionary. Instead a group of people consisting of the designer and a design team are one of many mediators. [31a] In this study, on the contrary, I will explore all the different stages of board game design by myself in order to gain a greater understanding of the creative design process*. This means that the help of fellow game designers is only used in the testing stage of my prototype, which will be elaborated in the latter part – the case study – of this writing.

The creative process is challenging to manage, yet very useful to acknowledge for all of us who are somehow involved in creating meaning through products or services. We are, after all, the architects of user experience. In the following I will attempt to clarify the process behind creative work such as it occurs in making a work of art and on the other hand – game design. But first I need to tell you about the historical development of the board game industry and most importantly, what characterizes this industry today.

*Game Design Process

GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL >
VISUALIZING > PACKAGE PROTOTYPING > TESTING >
(FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)
THE WORLD OF GAMES EXPLAINED

10

Games, playing and gaming are culturally definable terms. To play a game is a voluntary action. Playing games are attempts to detach oneself from the routines of everyday life. Human cultural history includes plenty of references to dice and card games. Board games have belonged to our cultural history since the beginning of civilization. The games of today are based on the ancient traditions of old games and playing patterns.[32]

2.1 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF (BOARD) GAMES

Classical games are a long-termed phenomena in the cultural history of games.[33] Historically, the objective in playing a board game has been to develop the memory and logical thinking through playing. The oldest board games found are abstract, strategic games in which there are no randomizing elements. Some of them are several thousands of years old. Chess, Go and the African game Gabatta have all been titled the oldest games in the world. A 5000 year old Backgammon board has been found in Iran.[34] Other sources mention The Royal Game of Ur as the oldest one in the history of games. This game is said to have been played in Babylon some 5000 years ago.[35]

Egyptians, Greeks and Romans have enjoyed playing games such as Backgammon, Checkers, Dominos and Chess for thousands of years. Board games have been enjoyed all
over the world except by the Eskimos and the first Australian settlers even before Columbus crossed the Atlantic.[36]

The earliest commercial board games began appearing in England around the 1590’s. These games were primarily targeted to adults and their idea was a race around a spiraling board. Often, a gambling element was involved.[37]

The early settlers that came to North America brought board games with them to keep their children entertained. The first American toy companies were founded after the Revolutionary War. As most of the games were made out of cardboard and paper, most toy manufacturers begun as printing companies.[38]

During the 18th and 19th centuries educational games became popular for children to teach them history, geography, zoology and morality. During the Victorian time dice were associated with gambling and thus not used in children’s games.[39]

At first, modern board games or parlour games, as they have also been called, were a form of entertainment for the upper classes. Only during the 19th century board games became more common among the middle and working classes. The first American board games are said to have featured elements from real life situations, like The Mansion of Happiness and the Checkered Game of Life (the latter by the company Milton Bradley in year 1860).

One of the oldest board games that is a commercial success story is the game Monopoly, dating to the early 1900’s with the name The Landlords Game. In 1904 this game was patented by Elizabeth Magie. Its idea was built around economic principles and it was supposed to teach about the property ownership system. In 1910 some students developed the game further into today’s version of Monopoly. In 1933 Charles Darrow copyrighted the game and begun selling it. The game soon became a success story in an age of depression and poverty and Darrow tried to place it at the Parker Brothers game company. In 1935 the company finally bought rights, begun the mass production and gave the game the its famous visual look with well known man with a moustache, Rich Uncle Pennybags, in 1936.[40]

The popularity of board gaming has been on the rise since the turn of the century. The most popular board games in the 20th century have been Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit. Trivial Pursuit was designed by Scott Abbot and John Haney in 1979.[41]

The popularity of Trivial Pursuit, (also known by its initials TP) resulted in a board game renaissance in the 1980’s. A renaissance of the same kind happened in year 2000, when a board game version of the world-known and popular TV show Who wants to be a Millionaire topped the charts for most sold games. Games based on TV shows have their beginning in Milton Bradley’s game of cowboy star Hopalong Cassidy in the early 50’s. As game companies were afraid that the TV would replace the playing of board games they started to
make games based on the shows. Television has indeed had the biggest influence on board games during the past decennia. From a Finnish perspective, the most important board games in the 20th century have been Monopoly (1935), Afrikan Tähti (1951) and Kimble (1967).

Board games are either language (or country) specific or universal. The games that have reached the status of a classic often are universal to their theme or game idea like Monopoly or Kimble. These are games that are not based on language. On the other hand such board games as Scrabble and Alias are language-based, but principally adaptable to many different languages – their game idea still remains the same. Adapting a game according to a culture means that it’s visual, textual and subject matter are fitted to the culture or country in question. For instance, Monopoly’s game idea works universally, but its content has had to be adapted according to each market because of the nature of the game board with familiar and “covetable” street names.

2.2 GAMES AND THE INDUSTRY TODAY
Board games have been said to live their renaissance during the first years of the 21st century. Although many board games are now available as computer games, the traditional board game is still a popular means of gathering friends and family around a table to enjoy each others company, while playing. Today, the game industry is a part of the entertainment industry. Still, the board games of today have to compete with other leisure time activities inside the same industry such as television, movies, different hobbies, console and computer gaming. How we spend our free time has become an important question. The significance of home and family members has increased, but even the importance of leisure activities has grown over the time. According to research made by Hasbro – a global company and one of the world’s biggest game companies – in 2005, playing board games has grown in popularity in all Scandinavian countries even though computer and console playing are becoming more important activities all the time. In a study where the Scandinavian countries were compared, Finland landed in third place among countries where games are played the most.

Economically thinking, the game industry has become an important player in the field of popular visual culture. In the creative economy, games can also be seen as products of the leisure, entertainment, editorial and content industries all of which are highly concerned with delivering experiences to the users. Zimmerman sees the game industry structured like any other content industry – it consists of producers, publishers and distributors and its endemic problems have mainly to do with technology, economics and culture.

The Finnish game industry is often considered to be too dependent on mobility, but this is not the case. Success stories such as Max Payne, FlatOut and Habbo Hotel prove that there is an ample number of alternatives in PC and console games as well. Success in the traditional game market combined with mobile know-how guaranteed that the Finnish
game industry is also well positioned to answer the challenge posed by the multiplatform games in the future.[46]

Many sources stress that the game industry has become the fastest growing industry in the world. It has even surpassed the film industry. The game industry is seen as a part of cultural, innovative industry. The cultural industry is a term from Adorno and Horkheimer and was introduced in 1947:

They concluded from their Marxist standpoint that all products, including cultural products like films and music, come forth by capitalistic means. A small amount of large concerns decide which products the consumer can select. All small concerns are forced, that is if they want to survive, to produce products that are the same as those produced by the trendsetters. In other words, because of expansion market concentration occurs and this withdraws room for diversity and innovation. Eventually there will be no authentic products, all cultural products will be the same.[47]

It's true that many games resemble each other. They are basically built of the same kind of components and to the same audiences. However, it would be naive to name games as products with less and less authenticity. According to my viewpoint the potential of innovations in the field of games is almost limitless. A game may be innovative in many ways: To its idea, components, mechanics, design... The list is long. Some cultural differences in game preferences might limit the overall globalization of board games. To some extent, different nationalities favour different games even though there are universal game classics.

When creating a new game idea, it is relevant to ask oneself if the game idea in one's mind really is a novel one. Ellington, Addinal and Percival remind that one must be sure of the things he or she wants his or her game to achieve. One must ask herself whether or not these things are already catered for in existing games.[48]

Game companies of today aim to produce games that have potential of becoming a long-lived product. A game company, or a publisher of games may bring out some 30-40 novelties out on the market each year. These games have been selected out of hundreds of game ideas worked up by professional game inventors, game designers inside the companies, other game publishers or everyday people. For example Hasbro receives some 1600 submissions a year.[49] A Finnish game company only gets a fraction of this. Still, the number of game ideas flowing to the publisher is much larger than the amount of games that can be commercialized during one year. Game publishing, not unlike book publishing, is a form of business that is reliant on the ability to see and distinguish the meaningful and exclude the meaningless. Thus, a publisher – also in the area of games – can be seen as some kind of an exerciser of cultural power.[50]

Every game company wants to create products which will become long-lived hit products on the market. However, coming up with a classic is for the gamers to decide. The life cycles of games have become rather short. Interesting games may not last on the market more than 2 or 3 years, as real golden eggs can live up to many decennia. From a game com-
pany’s perspective it may take from 6 months up to one and a half years to develop a game idea from scratch to a ready made product, depending on the visual material, components and textual content.

From a game designer’s viewpoint the world can be divided into zones of different board game cultures. Personally, I only can distinguish the following: German, British/English speaking, French, American and Scandinavian game cultures. The differences between the areas listed above mainly concern different languages, but also different cultural taste in games, having to do with visuality and complexity level of games preferred. Nevertheless, many classical games such as Chess, Backgammon, Mahjong and Go are hereditary to Asian cultures. But when discussing the Western hemisphere the countries/cultures listed are the most important ones for the board game culture of today. The strongest two board game cultures of the former ones are the German and American gaming cultures. German board games are seen as real “gamer’s games” with their high quality components, artistic visual materials and high complexity levels in their game mechanics. Some of the gamers see the German games as designer board games as they often have more tactical and strategic depth with a focus on the mechanism.[51] On the other hand, children’s games are often quite universal. How they are played, might differ slightly from each other, but the games themselves don’t have to be very different when considering the mechanical aspect. The visual look is a different story to which I will return later in this study.

The German Game of the Year (Spiel des Jahres), which was started in the 1970’s, is a meaningful institution to the game market. If a game succeeds in a competition like this it will sell from 50 000 up to 100 000 pieces. Winning a Game of the Year competition instantly creates an interest among the gamers towards the game. An example of this is the Settlers of Catan game, which of several versions are still being produced each year.

These competitions are carried out in many other European countries. However, they are not as meaningful as is the case in Germany. A Game of the Year e.g. in Finland can sell up to 12 000 pieces and this is considered a very good success.

The competition is fierce. The audience – the players of the world – await new games each year. According to my experience, the board game business has become a fashion industry. One of the reasons for this are the Game of the Year competitions in different countries of the world. A game that participates in these competitions needs to be based on a new idea. Another reason is that Christmas is every year. Somehow, board games are closely tied to this season. Obviously, this special time of the year brings friends and family together and social pastimes such as board games are favoured as activities.

Board games of today have to be up to date. A game publisher needs to answer the demand on the market place very fast. An ideal time for designing a board game from an idea to a ready made product is one and a half years. Sometimes, the game publisher has to act much faster than this. During my years as a game designer, I have seen an idea taken from scratch to a complete product even in as short a time as 3 months. In the board game business, as in any other business concerned with development of new products, there are only two recipes for success: Either a price advantage or an original product. The most successful products are often those which combine these two features.[52]
2.3 NEW CHALLENGES: THE FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL (BOARD) GAMES

The game industry has already passed the film and music industries in terms of volume as the most remarkable area of the culture and entertainment industry. Games will be used more and more in education, learning, communication, marketing and politics in the future. The game industry is one of the most innovative areas of business in the world of today. The supply on the market place is renewed up to 60% each year. One reason for this is the tremendous investments made in the game companies in order to produce more innovative game products. The game business can be seen as duality of classical board games in one end and new technology games in the other. I believe that the games of tomorrow will continue to be divided by this split. However, traditional board games may quite easily be taken from one technology into another without the rules or the gaming experience suffering from this change.

As Juul puts it, games are a transmedial phenomenon, since many different media can be used for playing games. The classic beloved games will still be around. Especially the children's games are probably going to stay very basic and traditional, as the future game concepts such as games with hybrid features will continue to attract new audiences to board games, such as teenage males and both young and senior adults. In the future, games may be more and more hybrid products – something between a toy and a board game. Toys may become elements in games, consoles, team players or opponents.

With the merging of technology and traditional toys, toy designers are becoming entertainment and information designers for children. Toy designers of the future will be regarded as transmitters of information.

Multimedia technology joins forces with tried and tested game principles in so called hybrid systems: Toy figures are brought to life and game boards interact with other players and the game environment. Even DVD's are being used as game managers and databases.

Electronic games have been influenced by board games. Now it seems that board games are striking back by taking advantages of the new media, such as the mobile phone technology, the Internet and DVD players. But will electronic products in general threaten the toy and game industry? Bob Eckert, CEO of Mattel thinks that the toy industry has done a good job in keeping up with its young customers. Eckert sees videogames in any case mostly played by male teenagers, who have never been a big target group for the toy trade.

Youth researcher Axel Dammler sees that the requirements on toys are increasing. They are supposed to have an educational purpose. At the same time, a toy needs to be both entertaining and give the parents the impression that they don't need to play an active role themselves during the play. Dammler's opinion is that the balance between entertainment and education needs to work – an educational game “can be smelled miles away”, which is necessarily not only positive.

According to my thinking another interesting challenge of the future is to develop more games oriented to women and
girls. The games for this target group have stagnated especially when it comes to themes.

According to Kangas, Mattel (one of the leading toy and game companies in the world) has a lot to say about how games for girls are now designed. In the field of electronic games the only trend in girl's games in the past has been to take traditional "girly" themes such as playing with fashion dolls into the game environment. In other words, games are designed based on the conception of "girlyness".

A Canadian study shows the stereotypical thinking of game designers' views on game characters and game environments. When the game designers were asked to design games for both boys and girls the boys games became games and the ones meant for the girls almost became educational tools.

As I have illustrated, the future of the game designer seems to be full of inspiring challenges. According to my thought, the game classics will be around for quite a while from now. There will undoubtedly be more games based on popular TV shows or movies both for children and adults. There will be more hybrid games having to do with the new media – that is, the mobile phone environment, the DVD and the Internet and quite probably some new media that we do not know of today. Most probably, there will always be some kind of games for children. Because through playing one can learn and enjoy herself, take one step away from reality and towards fantasy. Board games are indeed like miniatures of life itself. There are winners and there are losers. And there are many different experiences. Most of all, games are great adventures built up on different strategies and of course, some luck too. From a game designer's perspective, the aim is to maintain the traditional board games alongside with console, computer and new media games. Futurist Rolf Jensen sees tomorrow's world – or dream society – built up by [brand] identities about togetherness. Jensen discusses the emotional market, which is about solidarity and interpersonal feelings. About bringing people closer together if not physically, then symbolically.

The children of tomorrow will be more mobile and even more immersed in different kind of media. The toy trade is certainly concerned with challenges like an ageing population and the move towards new technologies. Still, there is optimism in the air, as Eckert sees it: Of course we are concerned about future challenges, but I think the solution is innovation. As we have seen in the past: When we innovate well, demand grows.

And as a toy industry professional Nancy Zwiers (one of the Wonder Women in the toy business of today stated by Playthings magazine) sums it up, to work in designing toys and games is rewarding. Once a creator of toys, always a creator of playing experiences:

"This industry is so great that people never want to leave it. If they stop working in one place, they'll find another toy company to work for, or they'll become a freelancer, but they want to stay in the industry because it's fun, and the people are fun. It's true."
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CREATIVE

3.1 WHAT ARE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION?

Creativity is not the finding of a thing, but the making something out of it after it is found.

(James Russell Lowell, 1819-1891)

The human being is the most important source of innovation. But what, in fact, are creativity and innovation? Who or what is innovative? A truly new product is an innovation. New things are the result of individual or collaborative creativity. Innovation can be seen as a result of two factors: foresight or specification what is desired. Another approach is problem solving or how to bring the specification into something concrete.[65]

Dingli sees an innovation as the symbiosis between a creative organization and creative people that produce innovation. It’s the interplay between the individual creativity and environmental creativity that is the driving force of innovation in any organization. The right climate, effective system, management of innovations are all needed.[66]

Pärkkä, Korhonen and Rusanen see an innovation as a product of a new idea, production and creation of value. A value innovation again, is a product combining a new idea with customer approval and production.[67]

5. I designed the mechanics for Dashing Donkey.
Creativity should not only be considered as a form of personal “wiring”. Instead, it should be seen as a process of developing and expressing novel ideas for solving design problems or satisfying needs. As Best points out, an unmet need can act as a starting point for an innovation. Thus, creativity is not so much a talent as it is a goal-oriented process for producing innovations.

The innovation process begins with two creative acts: the act of idea generation and opportunity recognition. In the first stage, a person develops an insight about something new. Once an opportunity is recognized, it has to be evaluated. If a decision is reached that this idea is going to be taken further, the next step is the development process. Commercialization is the final test for the idea.

The creative person, homo creativus, can give birth to fresh ideas, combine old things in a new way and find unexpected connections between different things. He is the successor of homo ludens, the playing human – one who deliberately seeks new experiences, plays with the possibilities of life, accentuates the ideology of freedom and likes to take risks in adventures. He is more relaxed and creative than homo economicus.

A creative person is sensitive and open to the impulses from the environment. It has been said that a creative person lives in two worlds simultaneously – in the one of reality and the other of fantasy. He or she can be original, versatile, imaginative, spontaneous, egoistic, intelligent, commanding and even aggressive. The creative person’s attitude towards work is playful; illogical, but yet organized.

Creativity can be viewed as a personal ability and the desire of a person to experience the world, freedom and one’s own resources. To be creative is to be brave and to design something new. Ekvall sees creativity as problem solving, an artistic process or a most importantly, a state of mind.

Creativity has also been described as a complete process which produces something that differs from the ordinary. The creative process can also be described as a procedure which results in a product that can be valued as new and important by either the creator or someone else.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has described the creative process with five steps: 1. preparation (immersion in a set of problematic issues that are interesting and arouse curiosity), 2. incubation (ideas are twisted and turned and new, unusual connections are made), 3. insight (pieces of the problem puzzle begin to fall into place), 4. evaluation (decisions are made about which insight is most valuable and worth pursuing) and finally 5. elaboration (when the insight is turned into something real).

*>
>**Preparation**
>
>**Incubation**
>
>**Insight**
>
>**Evaluation**
>
>**Elaboration**

Graph 2. Csikszentmihalyi’s description of the creative process.
(See note 74a)
According to Koskinen an innovation is a product already on the market, whereas an idea or an invention only represents a fraction of an innovation. Creativity is a competitive advantage in the business world.[75]

Top products, which involve creative input, help a company to create experiences which consumers consider both rewarding and valuable. The form and application of a product needs to fulfill the dreams of customers.[76]

In the field of business corporate leaders have titled Apple to be the most innovative company in the world. In a study completed by the Business Week magazine and Boston Consulting Group the second and third places were taken by Google and 3M. For example Apple's success with its range of i-products has improved the company's creative image.[77]

One reason for the innovativeness of the company might be that organizations like Apple, Philips and Braun have strong in-house design teams and individuals responsible for managing design. [77a] According to Jensen, the valuable employee of the future will possess the ability to create, cooperate, motivate, incite, and catapult initiatives. In other words, the ability to work in teams is a necessity for the employee of the future. Still, there is a need for one or two isolated geniuses.[78]

The truly innovative toys have some property that sets them apart from other products and that triggers the children's imagination.[79]

As I will try to prove further on, designing a good board game with real novelty value requires a balanced mix of tradition and innovation just as it requires the right balance between possibilities of having a strategy and on the other hand, the element of luck in the playing experience.

3.2 CREATIVITY IN ARTISTIC PROCESSES

*Invention is ninetynine percent perspiration and one percent inspiration.*

(Thomas Alva Edison)

All achievement, all earned riches, have their beginning in an idea.[80]

Innovative ideas can be flashes of inspiration, sometimes even accidental. Creativity and innovation are intertwined. The creative process itself is a series of events or actions one takes in order to produce an imaginative, but relevant way of approaching a challenge. [80a] Creativity helps to create new concepts, new ideas and thinking in new directions. An innovation attempts to bring creativity into a practical level so that it can be used in an advantageous way. According to Kuhn, creativity without innovation is an activity without a goal and innovation without creativity useless copying.[81]

To generate innovations is to go beyond improvements to the familiar. It is about solving problems that potential users do not yet recognize. Innovative activity demands broad-mindedness, courage and ability to take risks. A high energy level and an ability to see both details and the totality are also required. Innovation and creativity also require enthusiasm and optimism.[82]
In today’s world the time to use for brainstorming is more and more limited. Ideas have to be processed fast in order to feed the development departments, which refine the ideas into ready made products. This applies to most toy companies. Back in history, though, toy companies have had more space for creativity, as toy marketer Lynn Rosenblum explains in an interview for a toy trade magazine:

One thing is that we don’t have the “blue sky” groups that we used to. At Mattel [one of the world’s biggest toy and game manufacturers] you used to have a ton of people put aside just to ideate. They didn’t have to cost product, they didn’t have to engineer product. Creativity and innovation and brainstorming, all of that, aren’t necessarily embraced anymore as a job or a department. independent toy industry consultant Liane Czirjak agrees by stressing, that there does not seem to be the same investment in the creative aspect in the toy business. From my point of view this seems alarming as the toy industry should be one of the most innovative areas of creative work.

The Harvard Business guide for managing creativity and innovation suggests that the building blocks to creativity can be qualities such as resourcefulness, playfulness, tolerance, flexibility, persistence. The creative person should also be able to think outside the rules, accept differences, be receptive to ideas, have inner focus and recognize creative potential in herself.

In the creative department of a game company, such as in any other workplace where innovative activity is needed, a positive and encouraging atmosphere is essential. Where creative work is performed, there must be a tolerance for risks and mistakes. Only a small amount of the generated (game) ideas can be realized. Therefore, encouraging creativity means also that people learn from the unsuccessful projects. Vesterinen stresses that there needs to be a safe environment for the creative person to bring up ideas that are thought of as mad. A community of prosperous and enthusiastic people is a creative community. With effective management and clearly given perspectives, creative solutions can be refined into innovations.

3.3 IS CREATIVITY A PERSONAL ABILITY OR LEARNT?

Creativity seldom is a solitary act. There is no valid profile for the creative person. Intelligence only correlates with creativity to a point. Age is not a predictor of creative potential. But a creative person has a willingness to take calculated risks. Generally, individuals who are keen observers of their environment, the naturally curious ones, have often been thought of as creative souls. The creative person is willing to experiment and understands that not all is in the books. Also, the creative person understands to question a design problem whether its worth solving or not. He or she sees challenges as opportunities and does not fear for the future. After all, the things we know now are small compared with the enormity of the unknown.

All creative processes, whether flower arranging or television, require similar skills and ingredients. A sense of outline, a
sense of light and shade, a sense of proportion and a sense of colour. Further, all creative processes require access to what already exists: flower arranging requires there to be flowers and television requires the history of television in order to create new programs.

Thus, when thinking about designing a new game, a game designer has to have access to what is already out there; what kind of ideas have been refined into ready made game products by game companies in the past.

3.4 CAN CREATIVITY BE INFLUENCED?

[...] You can never know in advance who will be involved in a creative act, what that act will be, or precisely when or how it will occur. Nevertheless, a manager can create the conditions that make creativity more likely occur.

According to my opinion, creativity can never be taken for granted. It does not occur by pushing a button, nor by systematic labor. However, there are ways to influence creativity and innovational activity in the human mind: Brainstorming is one of the most used ways of generating ideas. According to Best, brainstorming can be seen as hands-on, collaborative and internal-research processes. Brainstorms help to define the crux of the design problem. This free flowing process should lack criticism of any kind.

People want to work in companies and organizations that make life meaningful through meaningful products or services. Values, missions and meanings in organizations really are important. Innovative people are the source for success. The biggest challenge facing organizations is how to build a culture that encourages the highest levels of employee creativity and commitment. How can employee creativity be encouraged? Through high-motivation levels, says Ståhle. Personal satisfaction is attributable to the quality of the working environment and its ability to motivate. 

"Creativity can never be taken for granted. It does not occur by pushing a button, nor by systematic labor."
GAME DESIGN AS AN ARTISTIC PROCESS

6. I am a game designer. But does it make me an artist or merely a professional in the field of visual culture?

GAME Design Process
GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL > (FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)

[... GAMES ARE GENERALLY DISTINCT from work, which is usually carried out for remuneration, and from art, which is more concerned with the expression of ideas. However, the distinction is not clear-cut, and many games may also be considered work and/or art.[92]

During the recent years, there has been a debate among game designers and other people involved in the business whether or not games can be considered an art form. Throughout modern history there are examples of theorists bringing up this matter in one way or another. One of them is Marshall McLuhan, according to whom:

Games are popular art, collective, social reactions to the main drive or action in any culture. Games, like institutions, are extensions of social man and the body politic, as technologies are extensions of the animal organism.[...] As extensions of the popular response to the workday stress, games become faithful models of a culture. They incorporate both the action and the reaction of the reaction of whole populations in a single dynamic image.[93]
4.1 GAMES AS PRODUCTS OF CREATIVE DESIGN ACTIVITY

According to Chris Crawford, a recognized game designer, creative expression is art if its made for its own beauty, and entertainment if made for money. He stresses that a plaything such as a game can be seen as a piece of entertainment if it is interactive. Films and books are considered to be forms of non-interactive entertainment. A game is truly an interactive medium, or a platform which encourages its users to interactivity.

A game needs to be designed in order to encourage interactivity. Thus the game designer must first and foremost understand the concept of design. Previously, designers have mainly concentrated on a discourse about things. Now the experiences of the user have gained a stronger focus: Margolin suggests a need for an expansion of design discourse, namely to change focus from the discourse about things into a discourse about experience. According to Dewey, for a situation to result in an experience it must include have closure and particularity. An experience is never generic but has a discrete identity with its own qualities.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, design as a noun is: [a] Mental plan; scheme of attack; purpose; end of view; adaptation of means to an end; preliminary sketch for a picture; delineation, pattern; artistic or literary groundwork; general idea, construction, plot, faculty of evolving these, invention. The designer according to Walter Gropius (1919), is a new kind of artist, a creator understanding every kind of need because he knows how to approach human needs according to a precise method.

The areas of design are many. Game design is mainly about designing the game mechanics and thematic environment but also about visual design involving graphic design and illustration. These elements all build up the potential user / game player experience.

When thinking about designing a game one should think of why games are played, in what kind of situations they are played and by whom? In my thinking, games are played mostly in socially interactive situations during leisure time. They are played for many reasons. One common thing to remember when designing a game is always to keep in mind what kind of end-user experiences are aimed at. Making a game is a design activity. To design something is to give that something a visual form and structure. Designing something is to communicate significance through visual appearance. A design project starts with initiation, continues with exploration and results in preliminary design and development of a product. For new products with fresh features, the design process is directly initiated by creative thinking. Design is also about solving a problem, a process the designer is involved in as soon as he or she confronts the possibilities to the evaluation of the end product.

According to Edel, creative thinking can be defined in the following way:

---

**Game Design Process**

GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL > VISUALIZING > PACKAGE PROTOTYPING > TESTING > FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME
The subconscious mental activity and subsequent flashes of insight of individual human beings are the distinguishing mental steps of the creative thinking procedure. Rosell points out that the design process is cyclical, even sometimes an amorph process. In other words, it may necessarily not be divided in predictable stages. To design is to learn by doing. The designer also needs to keep in mind the end-user during all the phases of the process. Reswick sees design as a creative activity that involves bringing into being something new and useful that has not existed previously. Personally, I think that the creative design process of a game includes distinguishable steps and therefore is predictable. On the other hand, what happens design-wise and creatively during each step might not be predictable. The designer learns whilst developing the idea.

Thus, designing a new game requires a creative thinking process during which the designer learns by doing. A good game designer does not forget the potential end-users of the products - the players of his or her game idea. When coming up with a new and functioning game idea, the game designer solves a design problem, if not many.

4.2 WHAT IS A GAME DESIGNER

It has been said that a game designer is probably the role with the most blurred job description and as such one of the most difficult positions to attain.

In my thinking, a game designer masters the art of making a game. A game designer is the person responsible for developing a game concept into a plan of development for a game. A game designer is thus not only the inventor of the game idea, but an architect who defines every aspect of a game, from how it looks to how it will be created. It is essential for the game designer to understand that he or she is creating an experience.

Additionally, the game designer can be seen as much more than this: To be able to create fresh ideas, the game designer needs to know about possible technologies used in games and keep up with the current trends on the market. In other words, he or she needs to be a researcher. He or she is a writer, because designing a game means writing down design documents. In a way the game designer can also be seen as a narrator, the one who tells a story with the help of the game idea. The designer is an artist, as designing a game idea requires the ability to visualize the idea into sketches and more elaborate material. Thus, a game designer can also be seen as a graphic designer, as he or she must come with a suggestion about the direction in which the further graphic design should be taken. The game designer needs to design how the game works, in other words its mechanics. Thus, he or she can be seen as a programmer who works within the limitations of the hardware (the game board and components) and the software (the rules of the game). Usually, the design of a game is all about team work. Therefore, the game designer must have the ability to follow budgets, work schedules and manage team relations. The commercialization process requires marketing work from the game designer as he or she often has to sell the idea for many people involved in the funding of the development of the game. The game designer in this case is also a sales person. However, before a game enters the commercialization process, it needs to be tested. A game designer has to be a game tester. Last but not least, the game designer needs to be able to communicate well. After all, the skills of a communicator are highly appreciated, when the created game design concept is presented to a potential publisher and ultimately, the potential players of the world.
Coming up with an idea for a game is not hard. Building and refining this idea into a playable game is the challenge. In other words the art of making a game. The similarities with creation of visual art start here: According to my view an artist can easily dream up an idea about a piece of visual art, but this is only the beginning. The refining process truly defines who is an artist and who is not, because as Russell Lowell has said: creativity is not that you find an idea – it’s what you do with it.

Being a game designer means having to tackle the design challenges presented by Lehti and Ristola. Apart from the task of creating original game ideas, these challenges can be anything having to do with the aspects of technicality, economics, functionality, aesthetic, timely and cultural demands.[102]

In a game publisher’s process the steps of product development are the following: Coming up with ideas to games (often through brainstorming with other game designers), selecting the best ideas, making the publishing decisions, developing the ideas into ready made games, and commercializing (planning the marketing and advertising for these) games. The development of ideas into real games involves decisions about what kind of components, visuality and rules the game will include. Since the game designers are the experts on the contents of the game, they are actively involved in planning the means of marketing to be used in promoting the games. Also, the game designer sometimes assists in producing textual material about the games to catalogues, other printed promotion material, advertisements and the company’s homepages on the Internet.

In my daily work as a game designer my job description is only one among many other people involved in the process of creating games. I’m only a small part in an engine that is built up of a team of other game developers, graphic designers, content providers and other experts. However, this study focuses on an individual project primarily processed by myself which will be clarified in the case study part this writing. I find it important to personally go through all the stages of the development process in order to better understand and be able to define why a game can be seen as a work of art. In this way I also have the possibility to work with my own creativity and to analyze my skills as a designer of a game – a potential maker of a piece of visual cultural art.

A product development group is a beneficial environment to work for a game designer. From the group an individual game designer gains the access to different viewpoints against which game ideas can be tested and questioned. Designing a game requires several different tasks: coming up with the game idea, theme and working mechanics to the idea, designing graphically the game content and writing the rules to the game. Often, a visual artist in the field of contemporary art faces the multitask challenge too: It’s hard to work alone to achieve ones plans for a work of art. Many artists of today thus rely on assistance, may it be material or technical. Therefore, in this study I will apply the concept of teamwork where needed. In a game development process this is crucial e.g. when testing the functionality of the game mechanics. To fully trust ones own opinion when evaluating a game idea of your own would be a fool’s job. A game only comes to life when it’s tested and played with the audience. According to my thoughts, so is the case with visual art.

**Graph 3.** Comparing Csikszentmihalyi’s creative process with a game company’s general game design process.
4.3 **GAMES AS AN ART FORM: A QUESTION ABOUT DEFINITION**

*If we are to produce works worthy to be termed "art", we must start to think about what it takes to do so, to set ourselves goals beyond the merely commercial. For we are embarked on a voyage of revolutionary import: the democrative transformation of the arts.*

In my opinion designing a game from an idea to a working prototype is an artistic process. But what is meant by art and artistic? The term *art* began to take on its meaning in the 18th century. Since then a work of art has primarily been seen as an object of aesthetic beauty, separate from everyday life. Staniszewski sees art as a demonstration of its maker’s freedom. A work of art is the artist’s absolute property, a surrogate for and realization of his or her essential self. The artwork acquires meaning and value when exhibited and exchanged in the free market.

According to Rémude Gourmont, *art is made to be sensed, not in order to be understood.* Thus, every time art is discussed in the context of logical thinking, all that comes up is only foolishness.

The definition of art is truly a hard task. Nevertheless, I need to try to define it according to my own view in order to be able to show later, in which ways games can be seen as an art form. So, what is art to me?

*Art is something original and personal that is made. A piece of art is unique and expresses the essence of style of its creator. Art is tightly bounded to creativity – there cannot be art without creative thinking, may it be accidental or deliberate. Art may be beautiful, ugly or stylish. The question is about creating an experience, designing a story that starts in the work of the artist and evolves in the thinking of the person sensing this – the viewer, the user or the consumer. Most art forms are stories of some kind.*

In Haselberger’s opinion, something with an *aesthetic intention* can be seen as art. I agree to this view as I think that most games of today are designed keeping in mind the intention of giving the game the best possible design both to its content and visual appearance. Games are and are not classified as art depending on the descriptor:

*Known to have been played as far back as prehistoric times, games are generally distinct from work which is usually carried out for remuneration, and from art, which is more concerned with the expression of ideas. However, the distinction is not clear-cut, and many games may also be considered work and/or art.*

A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in the pursuit of a goal.

A game is an artistically simplified representation of a phenomenon.

Games have rules, art has conventions; art is received, games are played, says Eskelinen. Traditional artforms play to a passive audience – games require active participation, Costikyan says. Eskelinen sees a difference between

---

**Game Design Process**

1. **GAME IDEA** > **MECHANICS** > **RULES** > **GAME MATERIALS** > **VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL** > **VISUALIZING** > **PACKAGE PROTOTYPING** > **TESTING** > **(FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)**
games and interactive art; In games the interpretation of the game affects the players goal-oriented activity. In art this action serves the interpretational interest of the user. [112]

In recent years there has been a lively debate between game designers and gamers especially in the internet about the very same dilemma. [113] Mostly, this discussion has focused on digital games and their relation to other forms of media and entertainment. Nevertheless, the question of games and art is not a totally new one. German game inventor Wolfgang Kramer reminds us that Adorno has identified games as an art form. This opinion differs from the one of Johan Huizinga (author of *Homo Ludens*, 1930) who has stated that games are only executed for pleasure and without conscious purpose. [114]

As a game designer I have often pondered about the possibility to consider games as a form of art. Surely, the process of making a game can be seen as including similar elements then the creation of art, as I'm trying to demonstrate in this writing. Also a game itself can be considered as a work of art, as Yehuda points out: A chess set might be beautiful. The rules of a game could be elegant. Also, the gaming experience in itself could be considered as a form of participatory art. A game is a dialogue between the game designer and the participants in the same way that a painting is a dialog between an artist and his viewers. [115]

The question of games as an art form intrigues game industry experts as well. I wanted to know what my co-workers in the board game business think about this question. As a result of a small study carried out in the narrativist research method, I gathered the following comments from some fellow game industry colleagues, including game inventors and business experts. The study was carried out as an e-mail interview in English language. The questions were: 1) Do you consider games as an art form? 2) If yes, why? (The outcome of the interviews appear in the following in their original form and have not been edited. Each quote represents a different interviewee.)

Art needs creativity, imagination, technique, to match between feelings and the material, esthetic and pioneering. Games have the same.

I believe that games are an artform, there is a German saying that "Kunst kommt von Können", art comes from being able to, would be an approximate translation, and we all know that creating games requires a lot of knowledge from the author, the designer and also from the publisher.

Making games is not a science as it is nearly impossible to plan it. Games are like books or movies, and they are considered art too. And like with movies, you need different artists to work together.

Yes, games are definitely an art form. I have lectured on this subject several times at various Swedish and British universities; in short, very short, this is because it is the energy, imagination, creativity and skill of its creator which gives life to the finished "product" (this term to be interpreted here in a very wide sense), much as in literature, music, painting, dancing and sculpture. Furthermore, games ARE a form of popular culture: social and collective reactions to the undercurrents and behavioural patterns in any society (Chess and Go as simulations of war, Mancala as a representation of astrological and pre-cabalistical interpretations of nature, and Ludo as an embodiment of Buddhist teachings, just to mention a few examples). They are extensions of social man and political and religious ideas, and therefore repre-
sentations of whole cultures – compare with for example Picasso’s “Guernica”, Beethoven’s Third Symphony! and Tolstoy’s “War and Peace!” – in dynamic form. The games played within a culture or a society say a LOT about it.

I think games are an art in a same way as movie scripts. They are more technical than books or paintings, but they are much more than a commercial product. Designing a game definitely feels like writing a script.

1. Creating games is generally not a form of art because it’s often more technical and construction work ... and finally not only created by one person but on its way from the idea to the product by a larger team (inventor-editor-designer etc.).

2. Creating games can be very rarely a form of art if somebody is really able to put in his own really originally handwriting – particularly if somebody brings a exiting theme to life. In that case I would name Klaus Teuber.

3. Creating games can be a form of art if the main expression is art and the gameplay is just a way to develop this further.

First, ... Games are industrial products for consumers, like, for example, cars, clothes or jeweleries. These products use a large part of design and their look depends on period influenced by many visual arts. It is the same for games.

Second, ... Games are intellectual and imaginative products, with often personages like hero (example: “Magic The Gathering” or “King Arthur”) like movies.

Wikipedia defines art this way: Art, in its broadest meaning, is the expression of creativity or imagination, or both. What is a game then, if not an expression of both? And like all good art, it requires the observer (or in this case the player) to have a personal response to it.

Yes, I consider game design a form of art because game design allows me to bring forth my creativity, create an effect, and evoke a response from the person who encounters my creation. For me, game design is an expression of self and that is the essence of art in my view.

The majority of the opinions quoted above show that the people working with game design see artistic features in games and the design of them. As a conclusion, I will stress yet another time that I consider games as a form of art like many of my colleagues in the game business. But as a game designer, where do I stand compared to other artists in the field of visual culture? Can a game designer be considered an artist?

Like any other designer, the game designer is not a lonely wolf. He or she works with and for other people. According to Potter, a designer’s formative decisions have a different order of freedom compared to the artist. A fine-artist is less dependent on discussion, agreement, letters, visits: the apparatus of communication that brings definition to a design problem, and relevance to its solution. Nevertheless, Potter agrees that designers too are content to bring certain artistry to their work.[116]

Computer game designer Chris Crawford has defined the term game through several dichotomies. In one of them he sees a game as art if it is made for its own beauty and entertainment if made for money.[117] I find this point of view problematic as I think art can be entertaining too. Thus I would argue that a game can be entertaining and still a work of art.
HOW A GAME IS DESIGNED

During my career as a game designer I have worked in three different ways to create a game: 1) By developing game mechanics of a professional game designer into a ready made product, 2) by adapting a ready made game into my own cultural context or finally 3) by starting from scratch with a game idea of my own and developed it into a game with the help of a product development team. The most challenging way to design a game is obviously the process in which the game designer’s task is to come up with the idea by herself. This is also the most rewarding way to work in my opinion. A game idea of one’s own can be twisted and turned however one likes, not having to care about what it costs or who owns its copyright.

5.1 THINKING UP A GAME — WHERE DOES IT ALL BEGIN?

Creating a game is a process of problem solving which is tackled through design and development. A game starts with an idea. According to a guidebook in digital content design the basic idea for a game does not need to be original, new or even solitary. According to this source it is enough for a game idea to be “fun” and fulfil the requirements of the designer himself. In other words, it is stated that a game idea is good enough if the designer would like to play the game he designed.[118] The thing seems to be quite the opposite in the board game industry, where novelty is expected of new game products. Certainly there are many games out there that include elements of well-known popular hits such as Monopoly or Trivial Pursuit. But a game designer of today simply could not present ideas even partly copied from existing games. The point with new board games is thus to bring fresh new ways of playing to the gaming audience.
Creating games requires both an understanding of the craft in game design as well as an appreciation for the ways in which games are played in the real world. In other words, designing a game requires multiple abilities and countless hours of creative and commercial endeavor. The process starts with answering the questions: Why do I want to design my game? To whom am I designing this game is the next. Is there a space on the market for this kind of game, does it have enough novelty value? What kind of game will it be? What materials does the game require?

It is fairly easy to come up with a good theme for a game, as games can be about anything in the visual and audiovisual world. Games can also be about touching (tactile games), smelling (e.g. games about scents) and tasting (for instance wine tasting games), but primarily, the board game industry is about games that can be seen and partly, imagined.

Game ideas can stem from inspiration, when the idea develops spontaneously, or systematically. According to my own experience the ideas to games come from almost anything in everyday life. Visual culture, ongoing trends and current happenings in the world all affect the creation of ideas. Fashion, interior design, movies, TV programs, magazines, even news can inspire the process of coming up with new game ideas.

In other words, anyone can suggest a good idea for a theme for a game. The clue in designing games is the ability to combine interesting thematic ideas with exiting mechanics – the ways to play a game. A game designer, may he or she be an industry professional, or just a dedicated gamer, benefits from having at least some of the following characteristics: be a creative thinker, have understanding for the game developing process and also have the capability to solve design problems. A game designer must have what it takes to make connections between seemingly unrelated topics to come up with something new and innovative.

Invention is borne out of experimentation, “playing around” with ideas until they become tangible, useful things. New product concepts are at the very heart of our [toy and game] industry and the future depends upon the continued innovation of designers.

Game design is primarily a user centered design process with artistic features. Board games provide a flexible and powerful technology for game designers. Game design is not only about coming up with a working idea for mechanics. It is about creating systems of playing. Thus, a game designer is an architect of systems and more importantly, an architect of the experience of play. Fundamentally, the design of games and thereof creation of meaningful experiences is not tied to technology.

There are three inseparable components of design: aesthetics of design, the communication of how to manufacture the design and the understanding of business and branding, which must be interwoven into a designer’s experience.

The most important tools for a game designer is his or her own creative mind, end-user (player) feedback and openness to ideas and different kind of stimulus in everyday life.
Knowledge in art history and the conventions of graphic design also help the visualization once an idea is created. It's the process of coming up with a totally new idea that is the challenge when thinking about games.

Developing a game from idea to working mechanics challenges the game designer with questions such as: What is the objective of the game? What kind of materials are needed? What are the rules, for instance – how does a player move around the board? A professional game designer also thinks about the social uses of a game.

Designing a game material includes the designing of the board, defining the nature of the playing pieces and how they can be moved across the board, determining the procedures by which players are allocated or acquire tokens, the relationship between movement on the board and any other aspects of play and the nature and role of any ancillary playing materials.[126]

The stages of a game design process are usually the following:
1. Coming up with a game idea.
2. Designing the mechanics.
3. Writing the rules.
4. Designing the materials for the game.
5. Visualizing the materials for the game (board, components, rules sheet)
6. Designing the package materials and visual look.
7. Making the prototype.
8. Testing the game with the right target group.
9. Making final adjustments to the prototype.
10. Offering (or pitching) the game idea to a publisher.

The process of creating and selling a game idea can also be viewed as four major categories: 1) concept, 2) pre-production, 3) production, 4) product.[127] My case study presented in the latter part of this writing is primarily about the pre-production stage, the foundation of a game. In other words, the design, prototype and first playable version of my own game idea.

5.2 DEFINITION OF GAME IDEA – WHAT THE GAME IS ABOUT

There are board games of virtually every conceivable sort and suitable for just about everyone – fast moving board games and slow strategic board games, board games about love and board games about war, children’s board games and adult’s board games. And each board game on those shelves is a result of somebody, somewhere having a brain wave.[128]

The inspiration to coming up with new game ideas can spur from almost anything. Most often the ideas I have come up with myself are based in the field of visual culture or literature. Visual trends or a play with words may be an incentive towards a brand new game idea. This was the case with the Dashing Donkey (Asinsilta) children’s game, which originated in a play on words. Having not seen a donkey in many modern games I decided that I would design a game with a donkey in it. The Finnish name for the game meaning literally a donkey’s bridge resulted in an idea for the game mechanics. The donkey should travel across a bridge and in the meantime perform a task of collecting fruits to the basket on its way.
The game idea defines the task in the game. In other words, what is the aim of the game, what do the players strive for or try to acquire – are there valuable pieces, places to conquer? What kind of movement through space or time is needed to complete the task – where do the players aim at? What kind of obstacles might there be on the way – what might set a player backwards on his or her journey towards victory? The goal of a game must be something measurable, relatively simple to measure and depicted in a game.[129]

There are two ways of thinking of the creative process behind designing a game. The first one is the subconscious, inspirational approach and the second a systematic approach. In the inspirational way an idea for a game develops spontaneously. How and why are often questions that cannot be answered in this process. In the systematic approach a game designer tries to solve a design problem logically.[130]

The logically managed creative process is a structure and involves the following stages: 1) The designer is presented with a problem, 2) the designer studies the problem, 3) the designer goes into a free form of creative exploration 4) the designer analyzes the outcome of the creative thinking and finally, 5) the designer comes up with a solution to the design problem. The point is that the best ideas are those that combine great creativity with solid practicality.[131]

When working as a game designer I have come up with ideas to new games in both ways. According to my opinion the inspirational approach is a more creative way of coming up with a new game idea. Thus, the best ideas I have had, have come to my mind in an incomprehensible way. As I like to think of myself as a storyteller, most of these ideas have their beginning in a story starting to develop in my head. Dashing Donkey, is an example of a project that started in this manner. In the beginning, there was a name for a game. Then a story was developed around that name. Later came the mechanics and the rules and the questions concerning the target group and the design objectives for the game.

A game can be made out of nearly everything imaginable, but it is not economically beneficial to make and publish a game out of every possible idea. Instead, as a game designer one has to keep her mind open and alert to the happenings in the world: What kind of ideas are out there already made into games? What themes and names have already been published by other game companies? How worthy is an idea to be cultivated into a published game? In other words, is the idea creative enough?

Coming up with a game idea is about designing a narrative structure. It is about creating a magic circle and transporting the players into it for the duration of the play.

For a game idea to be interesting (from a game company’s viewpoint) it should be fresh and have novelty value. In other words, such a game idea should not already exist on the market. The game should be either fun or interesting - or both - innovative and competitive.

The idea should be durable. This means that once refined into a game it would be played again and again, not just once.

Graph 4. Comparing Csikszentimilyi’s creative process with a game company’s singular game design process.
Included in this request there is the challenge of entertainment. A game idea should thus not necessarily be funny, but somehow intriguing. An absolute necessity is the request for easy-to-learn, simple and logical rules. This means that once the idea made into a game is taken out of the box, it should be playable almost at once. Regarding the components needed for the idea to be refined into a game, these should not be complex to set up.

5.3 DEFINITION OF GAME MECHANICS AND RULES – THE GAME PLAY

A game is a collection of parts which interact with each other often in complex ways. In other words, a game is a system.\[133]\] The game designer is the designer of the gaming activity. Salen and Zimmerman therefore identify creating a game a second-order design. Interaction cannot be designed, but rather the artifacts and rules that encourage or discourage the interaction in games.\[133]\]

In this writing, I’m referring to a game’s system with the word mechanics, or the core idea for the gameplay. The rules are the literal expression of the mechanics. Rules are limitations, whereas the gameplay is an interaction between the rules and the player’s attempt at playing the game as well as possible.\[134]\] Also, as Salen and Zimmerman point out, rules dictate the flow of a game.\[135]\] Designing a game system – its mechanics – has to do with creating the rules for a game. In other words what can and cannot be done in the game.

Meaningful play is an outcome of a working set of rules. Zimmerman lists certain criteria for rules: 1) they limit player action, 2) they are explicit and unambiguous, 3) they are shared by all players, 4) rules are fixed and 5) rules are binding. Finally, 6) the rules of a game are repeatable.\[136]\]

Everything that is in the rules is part of the game. Everything that is not in the rules does not belong in the game. The rules are the borders and the heart of the game. [...] Although the game has rules which are like laws, playing a game is voluntary and cannot be forced on the players. Whoever plays a game, voluntarily binds himself to the rules.\[137]\]

When there is an idea for a game it becomes necessary to define how the game is won, who takes the first turn and how many players can participate. Game mechanics is the core of the game, the mechanism that brings the idea to life. The mechanics are the groundwork for the rules; it defines what is possible and what is not in a game. According to Kramer, in most games the rules are more significant than the components. The components are the hardware, the rules are the software. Both define the game. Both can exist independently from each other, but separately are not a game.\[138]\]

The mechanics of a game determine what kind of choices and decisions the player must make during the game and the balance of strategy and luck. The complexity of the mechanism specifies the target audience of the game. It has been said by many game industry specialists that the perfect game is built upon the right mixture of elements of strategy and luck. It is often the interaction of these two that makes
If the game is too strategic, it can become too intellectual. If it is too much based on luck, it might become boring very quickly. Strategy makes the game fascinating by offering players the possibility to take risks. Luck adds the element of surprise into a game. Personally, I think that a game should include both.

Chance enters the game in different forms. In Kramer’s thinking the element of luck can appear in a game for instance through the following: With a random generator such as a dice, with different start-up situations e.g. by dealing cards in the beginning of the game, with incomplete information (that is, moving at the same time or the unknown strategies of the other players) or with a very high number of move options.

Partlett ponders, what makes people play a game with a theme that might be dated. According to him the game survives if it’s capturing and exciting to its mechanics, never mind its old fashioned look and idea.

Media philosopher Marshall McLuhan has said that a game is a vehicle that can be started only if the players are willing to become puppets for the duration of the game. It’s true that the players of a game must submit themselves to its rules. The rules make the game a game. However, according to my experience, the rules of a good game can be varied by the players as long as there is a mutual understanding of the goal in the game. Huizinga’s point is somewhat different. According to his view the slightest deviation of the rules damages the play, deprives it from its true nature and makes it worthless.

Eco, Huizinga and Baudrillard all agree that when discussing a game’s formal aspect, the starting point is its rule. Playing creates order, it is order. In an incomplete world the rules of a game create a momentary, perfectness. The immanence of a game means a total, yet voluntary surrendering to the rules of the game. When playing, the outside world loses its meaning, there is no time or history. This is, according to Baudrillard, the fascination of a game.

One player alone cannot win. Winning can only be discussed when one plays against another. Thus playing a game can be defined as an activity and one in which conflict often occurs. As each player is pursuing a certain goal in a game, conflict naturally arises. Games also include obstacles that need to be overcome. According some sources, a number of attempts have been done to design games without conflict – “nice” and so called co-operative games. However, these have not been a success on the market. It seems that people who want to play games somehow crave for one of basic elements in it – the natural conflict.

A children’s game benefits from a simple rule set up. By this I mean that there should preferably not be many versions of the game play in order not to confuse the young players. In a game targeted to an older audience, alternative rules often enrich the gaming experience.

The rules generally determine turn order, the rights and responsibilities of the players, and winning conditions.
The rules of a game need to be clear, complete and concise as they define how the game is played and how it is won or lost. The components and rules of a game result in its complexity level regarding skill, strategy and chance or a combination of these.

Common winning conditions are being the first to amass a certain quota of points or tokens, having the greatest number of tokens at the end of the game, or some relationship of one’s game tokens to those of one’s opponent. [149]

Holvsas points out that winning is as paradox as the game itself. Winning is ostensible as it is absolutely important for a game. Yet it does not mean anything compared with the actual game play. Playing becomes the intrinsic value, not winning. [150]

When designing a game it’s necessary to build up a working prototype in order for the mechanics to be tested. A prototype of a board game usually means a roughly sketched game board, playing pieces and other components of some kind and a randomizer such as a die, a spinner or a deck of cards. By testing the game the designer has the chance to become aware of how the planned mechanics work in practice and see, if there’s the right balance of strategy and luck in the game. The chosen target group defines the complexity level of the mechanics. When designing for example a children’s game the total playing time from starting the game until the winner is announced is an important factor. For children in the age group from 4 to 5 years the right playing time is 20 minutes as maximum. One game cannot be too long or else the players maybe do not want to play it again instantly. The desire to replay a game right after one game is over is according to my opinion a good indication of that the game designer has created a good gaming experience through a well thought mechanism in the game.

5.4 DEFINITION OF GAME THEME – GAMES AS NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

Creating a children’s game requires understanding the philosophy of play: Play is a straight arrow that shoots right into a child’s heart, thus filling emotional needs buried within. So as odd as this may sound, kids are not satisfied by the mere act of “watching” television, “playing” videogames, or “reading” a book per se. That is an observation made by adults from afar. The kid, at the bottom of it all, cares little about such “physical” things, which are simply means to achieve more important ends. A child really cares about the feeling of power he gets when he destroys vile monsters, such as the ones that challenge him in DOOM. He cares about his own fantasies he sees fulfilled when he visits Disneyland. […] [151]

The world of toys is a world of stories. In a way, games are stories too. According to Ellis, the designer of toys and games meant for children is in essence a designer of information: they select, organize, edit and present information to children, making a vital and formative impression on them. [152]

However, this information is not always about a story that lies behind a game, because not all games tell stories. Neither
can the experience of playing games ever simply be reduced to the experience of a story.}\[153\]

Once a person starts to play, he or she enters a situation outside the ordinary world and may be immersed in the moment of the game. Researchers of today mostly concentrate on digital game play situation. This world is more than a story – it is the world of play and fantasy. Play is distinct from ordinary life and contains its own course and meaning.\[154\] The bond between a child and his toy can be powerful, as Judy Ellis puts it. This relationship is described in the classic children’s story about the Velveteen Rabbit:

In one poignant scene, the rabbit wants to understand how to distinguish what is real. “Real isn’t how you’re made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”\[155\]

Many art forms attempt to transfer the audience into a different world, to present experiences or feelings not often known in the everyday world. [...] Fantasy is an important component of human play. It is critical to our recreation, our art and our games.\[156\]

The fantasy element is truly important in games, as it is a component of human play. It’s critical to our recreation, art and games. To play a game is to immerse oneself in the magical world of it, also titled the “magic circle”.

Games are objectively unreal in that they do not physically recreate the situations they represent, yet they are subjectively real to the player. The agent that transforms an objectively unreal situation into a subjectively real one is human fantasy. Fantasy plays thus a vital role in any game situation. A game creates a fantasy representation, not a scientific model. [...] The player’s fantasy is the key agent in making the game psychologically real.\[157\]

The theme is often a starting point for the design of a game as games try to represent different universes. Still, a strong theme is not enough. A game also needs a good structure or mechanics that go well with the theme.\[158\] How do game-play and stories relate to each other, then? As Zimmerman puts it, game design is a second order design problem, meaning that game designers directly create sets of rules, but only indirectly create the experience of play.\[159\]

Interactive representation has said to be the highest and most complete form of representation. The interactive element is a crucial factor in a game’s appeal. The difference between a story and a game is that in a game, the player is allowed to create his or her own story whereas the audience of a story must infer causal relationships from a single sequence of facts. Games lie between stories and toys on a scale of manipulability. This means that games allow the player to manipulate some of the facts of the fantasy, but the rules governing the fantasy remain fixed. Thus a storyteller has all the possible control over his audience, whereas a game designer only has indirect control. The designer of a toy almost has none of this control.\[160\]

A game can literally be about anything. The question is, is it worth making a game out of just anything? Usually the commercial reality of the game business limits the themes that are considered to be good choices for games. When designing a game the game designer actually is designing an ex-
Experience. Therefore, the chosen theme is of great importance. Like in visual art there are certain abstract works – that is games without a theme, or games in which the theme is very minimal, like in Chess or Checkers. The abstract strategy games come in waves on the market, but the history of card board games seems to concentrate on games with a more elaborate narrative content.

Games are the toy sector’s messengers in other product areas. This is one of the reasons why the book trade is trying to build bridges towards the area of games. Games are orienting towards literary models. Thus the narrative structures of gaming products can be seen as a future approach of storytelling. As a conclusion: Games are complex systems that create meaning. They are “alive” in their way of interacting with the players, who become characters in a story laid out by the game designer.

5.5 Branding the Game Visually: How to Tell What the Game is About?

Visual design is about organizing materials and forms in such a way as to fulfill a specific purpose. Visualizing one’s idea is an important part of game design. It becomes highly necessary, when the game idea is presented to a possible publisher.

If the merchandize doesn’t sell, the designer has not accomplished his purpose. Conversely, one of his greatest rewards is the realization that by producing good design he is affecting the lives of millions of people. And if he designs in good taste, he brings better living and greater satisfaction.

In a word, design: clarifies. Sound design champions simplicity, efficiency and usability. A well conceived product has a certain flow, a fun and inviting appeal, an ease of approach, user-friendliness, strategically placed functions, and an intelligent structure.

A game markets itself and persuades the buyer through its packaging; its visual look. Thus, graphic design plays an important part in designing a (board) game. The presentation should, however, not be processed before there is certainty about the functioning of the mechanism.

When the game idea is translated into a working mechanics and there is a decision about the contents of the game the visualization process of the game may begin. The first questions to ask oneself when thinking about telling what the game is about are the questions concerning what is to be communicated to whom and how and to what effect?

A player who has decided to play a particular type of game will prefer a game with excellent graphics over games with poor graphics; yet the graphics alone will not motivate to play games. [...] Good graphics, color, animation and sound are all valued by game players.

The graphics and look of a game slowly come together when the game idea is known. Illustration and graphic design both play an important role in the process of visualizing a game idea. With the help of even preliminary sketches and logos a game designer can communicate the feeling of the

Game Design Process

GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL > VISUALIZING > PACKAGE PROTOTYPING > TESTING > (FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)
thematic and mechanical aspects of a game. In order to make a game a successful commercial product it needs to have a fascinating look to its target audience. Therefore, both illustration and graphic design should be respected as independent artistic processes. Nevertheless, wonderful graphics do not by themselves make the product.

Illustration is an important stimulus for and expression of the visual culture of today. It is a creative expressive form. According to the traditional view illustration is a pictorial representation accompanying and complementing a text. Now illustration seems to increasingly become a design discipline in its own right.

Graphic design is always tied to instruments of different kinds. A graphic designer must be generally applicable for design work, have some kind of theoretical knowledge about graphic design and also have technological knowledge.

A graphic designer in the field of game design needs to follow her time in order to be able to compete in the innovative world of games as the graphic appearance is influenced by common trends. A competent graphic designer knows the audience and its expectancies, but he or she must also know what is happening in the business in order to give the games a competitive look.

Considering the graphic design of board games the use of a pencil is nowadays rare, especially when thinking about colouring. When one looks at the board games of today, it’s apparent that their looks have been created with the help of a computer. Designing, however, does not just mean the use of a computer, but practicing the use of a readable typography, chromatology and composition. Designing is thinking.

According to previous studies of my own the buyer of a children’s board game is most typically a female between ages 25-44. When giving the game its look, a game designer needs to bear in mind this fact. It’s not the children - the end-users - who make the buying decisions for a game, it’s the mother. Thus, the look of a children’s game must attract the mother’s eye first.

5.6 TARGET GROUP
As for creating visual art, it’s no longer enough for a board game to have a brilliant idea and a refined working mechanism. A game, as a piece of any other visual art, also needs to take into consideration its target audience and marketing potential. When a new game is ready it has to gain its reputation on the market just like a piece of visual art needs to be recognized and evaluated by the critics and the art context.

Playing a game requires both the game and a player. Primarily, the game designer works to create this game. Yet the final goal of the game designer is to educate, entertain or edify the player of the game. By defining a target group for the game idea - choosing the appropriate user category either by age, gender or other criteria, the designer can narrow the requirements for the specific group of people with common traits. Once the target group is defined, it becomes easier for the designer to begin to understand what this particular group feels is fun. The designer also needs to see his or
her target group in action – that is, whilst playing – in order to see what this group enjoys.[169]

The nature of your game enables you to guess the sort of person that is likely to be buying it, then it is important to style the presentation of the board game in such a way that it will appeal to that sort of person.[170]

Games can be targeted towards different audiences for example in terms of gender, hobbies, skills and areas of interest. How much an audience is into playing games is also a way of looking at the target audience question. Groups of people can be divided in anything between casual players to real hardcore gamers.

The target group of a game is often determined by its complexity level. A game designer needs to acknowledge whom the game is for and work accordingly to combine the theme of the game with the right level of complexity. Age is not the only determining factor in defining the target audience, but it is often the starting point for this definition:

The target groups for board games can be divided for instance in the following way: 1) 0-2 year old infants, 2) 3-6 year old preschoolers, 3) 7-12 year old schoolchildren and families and 4) 18+ adults. A game can also be targeted more towards either girls or boys. In my case study, I'm mainly interested in the preschooler’s category. Also, I'm taking into consideration the most common buyers of the games – that is, the mothers between ages 25-44. The person who plays the game might not be the purchaser. Thus, a children’s game must be designed so that it attracts both the player and the buyer.

Designing a game for children challenges the designer in many ways. Children often have limited motoric skills and differences in their attention span. It is therefore obligatory for the game designer to study the intended audience as much as the game in development.[171]

5.7 COMPONENTS AS GAME MATERIALS

Games are classified by the components that are required to play them.[672] When designing a board game one must think of the material needed for playing it. A set of rules, the board and some ancillary materials are the foundation of any board game. The ancillary materials can be playing pieces, tokens, cards, dice etc. Ancillary materials such as cards or tokens may function as randomizers. Naturally, the board is the most essential part in a board game. If there is no board, it would be some other kind of play material, not a board game:

The most important quality of a board game is its ability to gather the players around it, not in front of the interface such as is the case with console and computer games. The game board is thus a crucial element in creating an atmosphere of social interaction. Following Margolin’s thinking, the game materials can be seen as the interface of the game. As such the complex combination of a game board and game pieces are the interface we encounter with. The knowledge about how to access the services of this particular in-
interface requires specific learning. Where the product interface does not provide sufficient cues for a pragmatic engagement, we depend on some kind of a guide. In a game this means the rules where the game play is explained. The game board is also what brings the players together as playing pieces or pawns are personal. According to Partlett the function of the game board is to keep the players in track of the points they have collected.

The board can be multilayered or a 3D construction. It can be static or changing. The board shows the situation of game and shows the limitations of possibilities about how the playing pieces can be moved. The movement on the board happens with playing pieces. The game designer needs to ask herself what kind of elements would make sense to be used as markers to be moved around on the board or as score keeping devices.

Thus, the design questions when starting to think of the components of a game could be e.g. the following: What should the board look like? How many spaces should it have? What shape do the spaces have: square, hexagonal or round? How are the spaces laid out? Are all the spaces the same size or are they of different sizes? How many pieces are there? What do the pieces look like?

5.8 DURABILITY AND TIMELESSNESS

When designing a game the aim is not to make “one time wonders” of them. In other words a game needs to be timeless in order not to “get old” on the market too soon. A good game needs to be durable enough to its mechanics and often even to its theme to create a desire among the players to play the game again. The lifecycle of a game depends on its immaterial quality, seen from a player’s viewpoint. From a game publisher’s viewpoint the excellent qualities of a game may however not make it last on the market place. Thus, the lifecycle of a game greatly depends on the market forces: in other words ongoing trends and competition from other game publishers in the board game business. Nevertheless, a well-designed game with all the aspects in place; idea and working game mechanics, durable game material, clear rules and eye-catching packaging is what every game designer – aspiring or professional – should aim at.
CASE STUDY:
Analyzing the creative and artistic process of designing a children’s board game

HOW I TURNED MY IDEA INTO A GAME

The outcome of the second part of this thesis is a prototype for a game I have designed. It is the result of artistic and creative problem solving which I have accomplished as a game designer. The case study part of this writing concentrates on my analysis of the creative process behind making a game, in other words – developing it from an idea to a working prototype.

International research shows that the creative economy is going to challenge the traditional industrial economy in the Western world, and the game industry is the most rapidly growing sector of the creative economy. Creativity and innovation play major roles in the process of coming up with ideas to any new products. Therefore, I’m trying to shortly describe the generation of an idea. As a well-planned and actualized visualization process is crucial for a board game to become a successful product, I will also go through some basic issues having to do with the industrial and graphic design of the product. The world of children’s games is close to the world of children’s books. This is why I also want to point out certain issues having to do with contemporary illustration.

The favorites among the games that I have played part in creating in my profession are always the ones in progress. Therefore, I have chosen to clarify and analyze the design process of a board game based on my own game idea in the following. The aim is to stress the similarities between creation of a work of visual art and creation of a board game.
6.1 FROM IDEA TO PLAYABLE PROTOTYPE

The challenge of the designer is to invent a game which is so much fun, or so intriguing, that a child will want to play it over and over again. [177]

Producing the basic idea for a game, simulation or case study is by far the most creative part of the design process, and since creativity cannot be made to follow any predetermined set of rules, it is clearly not possible for us to give a 'magic formula' which will automatically come up with a satisfactory solution to all design problems. [178]

Ellington, Addinal and Percival believe that most of the people in the world have what it takes to design a game, provided that they tackle this challenge in a systematic way. [179]

On the other hand, Mclean stresses that there is no such thing as a typical board game inventor. [180] Crafting great games means dedication for the task, just like in any artistic process. Anyone can design a game, but not everyone outside the board game business knows what is lucrative for the game companies to publish in order for the games to be success stories on the market. Women and girls are growing in importance as players of board games not unlike the development that is happening in the world of digital games today. By entering the field of board games as gamers women and girls also have the chance to reshape the gaming culture according to their own preferences. [181] In my opinion it is also important to encourage women to become game designers more than has been the case in the past. The world of games needs a feminine design approach, especially when it comes to the design of children's games. The opportunity for women to get involved in game design might grow in the future, as the number of women escalates in the field of product development. [182]

My personal history in games begun in 1981 at the age of six when I started to work for a Finnish board game company started by my grandfather in 1967. My first task was to collect the playing pieces for the Kimble game in plastic bags. I now work as a game designer for this company.

My interest in this case study lies in the creative process behind coming up with a new game idea and developing it into a potentially interesting prototype, fascinating both in its narrative framework and visual elements.

The following pages constitute the artistic part of my thesis; Analyzing the Creative and Artistic Process of Designing a Children's Board Game. The case focuses on the process of developing a children's game idea of my own, namely Raccoon Wash Rush from the basic idea to a game prototype with working mechanics.

According to Judy Ellis, (chairperson of the toy depart- ment at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York), the criteria for a good toy are the following: A good toy

1. Leads to discovery and creativity.
2. Is fun.
3. Is educational.
4. Is age appropriate.
5. Is safe.
6. Respects a child's intelligence.
7. Is user-friendly. [183]
In my opinion, the listed criteria also are the critical foundation when designing a game for children. In other words, a game incites a child's imagination and encourages him or her to enter the world of the game. A good game, like a good toy, should inspire, delight, surprise, satisfy, and provide an adventure for the child. A good game is a safe game. It's sturdy and durable and meets the safety regulations in all the countries it is marketed in.

Games are often educational; they help the children to understand things. Games develop language skills, hand-eye coordination and often something about the player himself. Playing a good game encourages problem solving and teaches about how to deal with misfortune when losing the game. Also, playing with others helps the child to develop his or her interaction skills. Like a good toy, a good game never frustrates or bores a child because it is not age appropriate. That is to say that the game respects a child's intelligence—it does not underestimate the player's capacities. Finally, the game like a good toy should be inviting and fun, stimulating a child for more than a few minutes. When thinking about children's games especially, there are some criteria which conclude this list. These are: uniqueness, beautiful graphics and simplicity.

Designing a game means most essentially building a working game out of an idea. Selecting the content, format and structure and ultimately giving everything a visual image that suits the story behind it all. In order to commercialize the game idea the game designer must produce a prototype of the package. Finally, the game has to be tested with the target population to make sure that it functions. Not only is a working game mechanism an argument for it to be published. Additionally, the game must create a positive experience when played. In other words, it needs to be entertaining. Thus, a game designer must have the ability to tell his or her story in a way which gives the game meaning when played.

In the following I will analyze the creative and artistic development process of taking my game idea Raccoon Wash Rush from scratch to a working prototype. The meaning of prototyping is to test the drafting stage of the design process. The prototype is produced with ordinary tools. As Ellington, Addinal and Percival define prototyping, the design and production of all the various materials that will be needed to play (and, if appropriate) run the game.
The idea phase of game development is the concept phase. The idea for the game is where it all starts. Many games have their beginning in a thematic idea; first a storyboard is created for the game, then a design. The game designer then tries to find interesting mechanics to this foundation.

The name is often one of the earliest considerations given to a board games project.

It is not easy to define the moment when a new idea comes to one’s mind. Such is the case for game ideas, and such, I believe is the case when creating a work of art. New ideas for art projects just like game ideas are often results of spontaneous insights. However, it’s hard to define the length of the overall psychological process underlying creative thinking. There are certain ways of encouraging the brain to work more effectively, but one cannot be forced into coming up with an innovation.

I have worked with many children’s games during my career as a game designer. Some of them have been based on an original idea of my own. For most of them the idea has gotten its start from an inner image or a play of words in my head. I have also actively tried to think about unconventional things put together in a way that has not been used in a published game before.

The name of the game is utterly important. The name should reflect the nature of the game in a straightforward way. It should be short and catchy and not too close to the game names that are already on the market. My choice for a name for my game is *Raccoon Wash Rush*. For me this name has a rhythm to it. Most importantly it compresses the three basic elements of the game idea into a name: First, it has the word *raccoon* in it. Everyone will know that the game is about these animals. Second, the game is about the raccoons having a *washing* day. Finally, as in many games, the players compete against each other in a *rush* to complete the task – the aim of the game before anyone else does. Therefore I chose to include this word in the name. Although the name of a children’s game should in some way express all the possible
information about the game idea, most of the times a subtitle is needed. For my game I chose the following: *Children’s game with cute characters.*

For the preschool segment the most important elements of a game is that it’s fun to play, it contains a few surprises and that it features the right balance of strategy and luck. 3-6 year olds are often very skilled in games that require remembering the order of things. Therefore all kinds of memory games are popular in this age group. Including the memory element in a game meant for this age group thus instantly adds interest to it.

The need for good children’s games seems to be never ending. Games are considered to be a category of toys and for toys the concept of novelty is crucial. In practice, this means that several new ideas for children’s games are needed every year. This thinking was the starting point for me to think about *Raccoon Wash Rush* (*Pesukarhun Pyykkipäivä* in Finnish) – a children’s game with raccoons that have a washing day and must rush in order to collect the laundry and to clothe their kits. Here is my story behind:

*It’s washing day for the raccoons. Four raccoons live at the edge of a wood with their kits. Each of them has three kits. The kits have been running in the wood and playing and got their clothes all dirty. So their clothes have all been put in the washing machine.*

### 6.3 Raccoon Wash Rush Theme

As noted, children’s games are often universal as is the case with my game idea. With this I mean that the basic idea in the game functions universally. The game is played the same even though it would have a different name or appearance depending on the country where it is published.

As in many toys, animals are popular to use as characters in children’s games. Alongside fantasy figures and (license) characters from children’s TV programs and movies, traditional animals such as bears, dogs, mice and cats have been used in board games for a very long time. Even animals of the jungle or other exotic animals such as polar bears and dolphins have been used in many games. In my own game I wanted to use an animal that is somewhat more unusual in the context of children’s board games. I thought of a raccoon with its funny eyes and unconventional fur colouring.

As suggested in game design literature, I started the process by immersing myself in the topic: I started to ask myself questions: What exactly does a raccoon look like? What size of an animal is it? Which colour and texture does its fur have? What does a raccoon do, where does it live? Does it clean itself, its kits (that is the children of a raccoon)? What kind of clothes could a fantasy raccoon wear in my game?

The process started with looking things up in different sources such as literature on animals and the Internet. The raccoons – or *Procyon lotor* – are nocturnal mammals known for their intelligence, curiousness and mischievousness. The baby raccoons are called kits. Raccoons sometimes wash their food in water before eating it. Raccoons are playful and enjoy a cuddle.
A raccoon resembles a small bear. It has a wide head and a sharp snout. The ears are large and round. Its feet are long and covered with short fur. The raccoon has toes that are very mobile. The colour of the fur is grayish. The lower parts of the body are lighter in colouring. The face of the raccoon is covered with short fur and a dark mask. The tail is bushy with dark grey stripes. The raccoon feels at home near the water.

The following question in line was: What kind of characters could the raccoons be when transformed into playing pieces? Which material could be used for the playing pieces? What could the raccoon kits look like and what material could be used for them?

I studied several children’s books with a raccoon theme in order to make up my mind about the visual characteristics of the raccoon characters in my game. I was lucky to find a good variety of different drawing styles from both international and Finnish children’s books to use as information and inspiration. After taking a closer look at the illustrations in these sources, I started to sketch the first designs of my own.

What material should the clothing for the raccoons be so that they could easily be fitted on the playing pieces by the players, was another question. In the prototype I decided to use a combination of felt and elastic band so that the kits could be easily clothed.

6.4 RACCOON

WASH RUSH MECHANICS

The central problem in designing a game structure is trying to find out how to distill the fantasy of the goal and topic into a workable system – that is, the game mechanics.

The game must have an objective, a common goal for the players. The one who completes the given game challenge first is the winner of the game.

How many players can participate in the game? To which age group does my game suit – how complex is the idea? What is the duration of one game? These are all questions having to do with the mechanics of the game. A rule can not be written, unless there is a working game mechanics.
The mechanics are built up on the idea of the game play. The play pattern of my game is explained in the following: In Raccoon Wash Rush the raccoons are busy finding laundry from the washing machines. The task is to help them find the correct t-shirts from the washing machines by moving a raccoon on the board. By playing out a blue card your raccoon can move to a circle on the board. Along the way there are markers to pick up. A marker with a washing machine entitles you to open the machine of that colour. There are special markers too. Some of them help the players in their task and some will slow them down a bit.

Once a player has found a t-shirt in the right colour, he or she puts it in the basket and starts to move back home. Once the raccoon is home again, the player may dress a kit with the t-shirt before going after another one.

The winner is the player who is the first who has found the right three t-shirts indicated in his or her secret cards, taken them back to the starting square and dressed the three raccoon kits.

"The central problem designing a game structure is to find out how to distill the fantasy of the goal and topic into a workable system – that is, the game mechanics."
10. I found children's books with raccoons. The black and white sketch is my own.
Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty.

(Daniel Burnham, American architect)

A game must be visualizable — it must be possible to picture what is going on — and it must possess a certain simplicity or elegance. There must be a feeling that a world is being created which is interesting to explore.

Visualizing means thinking of the world ahead — what can be made seen of the future by sketching it out. With the help of a prototype, the game idea is translated to a visual language. A game idea is more easily communicated to other people with a prototype, a model of the game. Even though the planning of a game would be far, a simple prototype usually is the best tool to demonstrate the idea and test its functionality. A prototype is a concrete means of showing the functions of the game mechanics. It gives an idea about how much the ready made game can cost, how heavy the game will be once packaged. A simple prototype is built of paper and cardboard. A plastic prototype is rarely produced because of its high cost. However, too much emphasis can’t be placed on the importance of being able to build up a 3D model. Especially, in a board game where the game board and components play a major role in the narrative context of the game, it is necessary to communicate the game idea through a well built prototype. The main task of the prototype is to clearly communicate the fun and innovative aspects of the game.

11. I chose raccoons as the characters for my game.
A first prototype is rarely beautiful, but it’s still a playable game, which connects the challenges of game design in one, complete set.[992]

Henry Dreyfuss has said that he sees the ability to visualize as the industrial designer’s most valuable contribution to the product. According to Dreyfuss a man achieves his tallest measure of serenity when surrounded by beauty. Industry, technology and mass production make it possible for the average man to surround himself with this serenity.[993] When something is thought of working as well as it looks good, there is a reason to buy this product. Good design can become a trademark of quality.

According to Dreyfuss’ five-point formula, there are many ways to tackle a design problem. These are: 1) Utility and safety, 2) maintenance, 3) cost, 4) sales appeal and 5) appearance. First, according to my own experience a game (especially when we think of it as a toy) can never be produced unless it is safe for the user. Regarding maintenance, it is useful for the game publisher to be able to ship replacements for components should a player lose them somehow. As for the cost, all games must be designed in a way that they are cost-effective both for the publisher and the buyer. When it comes to the sales appeal of a game, it must be novel enough to attract the eye of the salesman inside a game publishing company, otherwise it will never reach the stage where a consumer – the possible player of the game – can find it on the store shelf. But most important of these five different criteria, is the appearance of the game. A prototype of a game idea should thus be crafted as beautifully as possible.

The visualization process of a game idea into a working prototype starts from sketching, just like when starting to plan a piece of visual art. According to Jean-Luc Nancy’s thinking sketching could also be seen as the word that remains unsaid or a sentence unspoken, a quiet dialogue of the soul with itself.[994]

The graphic design of a game means combining illustrations (in a children’s game e.g. images of characters, environments, game components etc.) with textual information, such as the name of the game, different explanatory slogans and information regarding possible number of players, age recom-
The hand draws a living line. The line drawn by the computer copies the hand drawn one, making it similar, yet not the same. A line drawn by the computer cannot be matched by that of a human being. However, computers are an important tool in today’s world of graphic design, although from a designer’s perspective a computer does not understand or design anything by its own. Working with a computer allows, however, rapid changes to be done to the design.

According to Leino, a [digital] game designer has nowadays more possibilities to achieve his or her artistic insight as the technology no longer stands in the way. In my opinion the computer even allows the designer of a traditional board game to experiment with the potential visual look of the game in many useful ways. Usually the visual design of a board game is the result of graphic design done by hand and with the help of the computer.

Before starting with the graphic design process of *Raccoon Wash Rush* I tried to bring back memories of games which looks I have liked. I don’t have particular favourites among well-known game designers (in terms of people who design game mechanics maybe with German Haba and Anja Wrede as exceptions) but I have always liked the looks of the children’s games from the following designers or game companies:

Explanatory are Haba, Nathan, Orchard Toys, Zoch, Patch, Briarpatch, Gamewright. Especially German companies like Haba and French companies like Nathan are able to present children’s games in an admirable fairytale illustration-like approach. Central-European game illustrations often rely on hand-drawn styles with an eye for detail, whereas British and American games tend to have a computer-designed look with focus on bright colours and 3D-animation-like round, plastic features. Scandinavian games establish themselves somewhere between these two borderlines, having their own special look. In the board game business, the chosen way to illustrate a product certainly plays a major role indeed.

Graphic design guides stress the importance of unexpected combinations, manipulated symbols, colour, improbable settings, humour and roundabout settings of telling a story as ways of creating unique design styles.

Style is an important component of our identity and the way we present ourselves. What would be the style of my game? My intention in visualizing *Raccoon Wash Rush* was to create characters and environments of my own style, combining them with the experiences I have in the area of Scandinavian board game design. Ultimately, the game will be offered to other European and quite possibly some other countries as well, but I chose the Scandinavian look with a French twist (meaning soft colouring here) as a starting point for my own graphic styling.

---

**Game Design Process**

GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL > VISUALIZING > PACKAGE PROTOTYPING > TESTING > (FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)
Mareis sees a return to analogue and manual techniques in contemporary illustration:

The new illustrations are hand-made, flawed and trashy, and it is precisely this that makes them poetic. […] Analogue and digital illustration techniques are mixed at random. Parts of the illustration are created by analogue means, and then digitalized and manipulated further. Such processes can be repeated and reversed at will. The main thing is that they are personal, and most important: not just digital.

The starting point for the visualization of my game was the idea to draw by hand. The characters, the environments, the game components. I wanted to find out if and how I could meet the demands of contemporary illustration listed by Mareis, which are: drawing talent, technical skills, artistic independence, stylistic diversity, love of experiment and innovative potential.

7.1 PACKAGING

The cover of a publication, such as a game, has to get the viewers’ attention. In other words, the graphics present the idea and this idea needs to be communicated for the potential buyers. In a game aimed to children the message needs to be delivered through meaningful images. Pictures perform the dual function of gaining attention and communicating. The language of the picture corresponds to our basic experience.

Packaging has become a vital part of modern business. The package expresses quality of its contents.

Often, when package and product both are used in display, the package assumes importance as a background and companion piece to the product. Often too, a package is utilitarian as a permanent
storage place for the product; then it becomes an adjunct to the merchandise, really a part of it, and should be designed concurrently with the product.

A board game package should present the idea of the game in a clear and articulate manner. Colours, shape, size and weight come to question when designing the box for a board game. The package needs to look good, tolerate the usage and sometimes even function as a component of the game itself.

From a business-minded viewpoint, the packaging is the most important part of a board game. If the packaging does not work, the game inside it – may it be as brilliant as possible – does not have a future. Everything is about presentation. In other words, the box the game is packaged in must be both eye-catching and attractive and most importantly, it needs to communicate the game idea as clearly as possible.

Unless a buyer notices the game on the shelf the “game” is already lost. No marketing can ever compensate a badly designed game package. Marketing, such as print, TV, movie theatre, radio or internet advertising will create conspicuousness about the game on the marketplace, but will it ever help the potential buyers of the game to find it unless the packaging truly attracts the eye?

All the parts of a product that a consumer sees or touches, greatly affect the buying decision. The components which cater for the imagination of the buyer make the product appealing. A game box can rarely be opened in the store. Thus, the consumer cannot feel the contents in a game before buying the product. Therefore, the packaging needs to communicate the contents in a game as clearly as possible.

So I needed to ask myself: What kind of a look do I want for the game packaging? Which colours do I want to use on the box and why will these colours attract the eye of the potential buyer? What is the box format, in other words the shape? Does the box need an inlay where the game components can be stored? What is the style I intend to give this product?

One can test packaging alternatives to see which best “pops” off the shelf and communicates the game idea. The importance lies in determining if the packaging communicates an aura consistent with the game idea.

With all these things in my mind, I gave my game idea a personal, softly coloured look. The pastel colours used throughout the design make the prototype stand out from many brightly coloured children’s games already on the market. The big box format (approximately 30 x 30 cm) allowed a widespread use of graphics, designed in a style of my own. The design communicates my personal preferences in the visuality of a game.

---

**Game Design Process**

GAME IDEA > MECHANICS > RULES > GAME MATERIALS > VISUALIZING GAME MATERIAL > (FINALIZING AND PUBLISHING THE GAME)
7.2 GAME BOARD AND COMPONENTS

As mentioned before in this study, everything in a board game – as the name says, centers around a game board. It is important to make sure that each item in the game fulfills its specific function, fits into the general context of the game and is consistent with other materials in the totality.

The components in a game need to be designed in particular sizes to optimize the production process. The size of the playing pieces has to be designed to fit the game board and other materials. Also, the designer must evaluate if the chosen components communicate the impression of being worth the money, if and when the game is published.

The design questions regarding the game board were the following: What is the function of the game board in my game? Does it define the mechanics by itself or are playing cards needed to determine the movements around the board?

The content of Raccoon Wash Rush ended up being the following: Game board, 4 washing machines in card board, 4 Raccoon playing pieces, 4 laundry baskets, 12 raccoon kits, 32 markers, 52 cards, 12 t-shirts in colours blue, red and green.

The special feature of my game are the washing machines. I needed to ask myself the following questions: What kind of fantasy washing machines could the raccoons use? Should the washing machines just be presented as a machines or should it have a character of its own? How would the players operate the washing machine – by using coins found on the game board? Should the washing machine function mechanically or could it even be battery-operated? I decided to go for card board machines, which the player may open using special game markers.

The next question was about the playing pieces and markers. The components in a game have to be designed both materially and visually. When choosing the material, the game designer must think in terms of different qualities. The aesthetics of a game is of great importance, but there are other things to keep in mind as well. For some people weight can be a sign of quality. Thus the designer of a game should think of the game as a physical product. Do sturdy game components mean extra quality? Might a too light weight game box communicate a game with too little content in it?
The decision was to propose game markers and other card
board components to be made out of thick and durable mate-
rial.
    I ended up designing round markers with different sym-
boils tied to the mechanics of the game. The markers are
found in the slots of the game board which is made of thick
cardboard. Partly, these markers are used for opening the
washing machines. On the other hand, there are certain
markers with special symbols on them, which bring excite-
ment to the game.

7.3 Rules Sheet
A game meant for the preschool segment is usually very
universal to its theme and mechanics. Children’s games are
mostly built around nice little stories or plots. Since games
for this age group rarely contain any text elements (with the
exception of learning games) the only text that is needed in
them are the rules.

In the preschool segment (3–5 years), the child does not
very often know how to read texts. Thus, in games for this
age group the only text featured is in the rules sheet. The as-
sumption is that once the child receives a game there is al-
ways an adult present to read through and explain the rules
to the child. However, the child of this age can interpret
symbols through which the mechanism - or game play - can
be communicated to the child.

Clarity of rules – both textual and visual – cannot be
stressed enough. On the rules sheet, the contents of the game
are once more repeated, as is the age recommendation, the
number of players and the approximate duration of playing
one game. The text on the rules sheet allows the game de-
designer to guide the players into the story by giving informa-
tion about the starting situation of the characters which rep-
resent the players. The most important part of the rules is
the explanation of the game play: How the game is started,
what happens on the way and how the game ends. The rules
of a game are laws for what the player can and cannot do in
pursuit to win the game. So the questions were: In which
format are the rules presented? What is the shape and size of
the rule booklet and what is the number of pages in it? Will
the game be multilingual or not? In my prototype, the rules
are presented on a big sheet. I made the decision of only
making one prototype in English. Thus, all the written ma-
terial in the game including the rules was done in the same
language. (The rules text itself can be found in Appendix 2.)
7.4 FEEDBACK: TESTING RACCOON WASH RUSH WITH TARGET AUDIENCE

A game, like a piece of visual art starts to communicate meanings when it gets in touch with its audience. In visual art it’s the viewer – in a game it’s the player. Thus, for a game designer, it’s utterly important to know about how one’s game is received, what kind of feedback it gets. For a visual artist I think that it’s also very meaningful to know how the viewers have reacted: How the work of art works for them in comparison to the artist herself?

The first full-scale field test of a [game] package [...] is an extremely important stage in the development process. It should be organized and supervised by the designer, and, if possible, should be run with a group of people drawn from (or similar to) the target population for which the exercise is intended.\[205\]

A highly practical research is possible when mock-ups of our designs are built.\[206\]

Will my game work? Will the game I design satisfy my design goals? Will it have a fun factor for the players? A designer can never be certain if a game works, unless it’s tested with the right audience. Therefore a working prototype is needed. A prototype also permits experimentation. Ideally, the playtesting process is about gathering information about the functioning of a game in order for the idea to be polished and refined before entering the commercialization stage.

The game designer gains useful knowledge by observing the test players. In fact, observation can also be seen as a design method. Observing the end-users of the game playing the prototype gives the designer a better understanding of their actions.

During the testing the game designer learns about how well the play flows and how the game is received by the players. In a test-playing session one can learn interesting things about how the players react to the theme, materials and looks of the game, as well as the functional aspect of the mechanic and rules. Testing reveals whether the players are enjoying themselves or not. If the game triggers positive feelings and a desire to play again, the game idea has potential to be developed into a commercial product.

There is seldom a direct contact between the game designer and the actual player of the game. Therefore testing of the game is simulated to get an idea about the functionality of the game idea before the game is put on the market. Just like in the field of visual art the artist rarely comes in con-
tact with the viewer of his or her art and can thus not com-
municate otherwise than trough the work of art. I think that
in this same way a game designer communicates with the
player through the game itself. The physical board game with
its components becomes a means for the game designer to
communicate with the user of the game – that is, the player.

During the testing the players should be able to freely
point out any aspects of the game that could be improved and
thus need further attention. The game should be tested as
many times as possible in order to guarantee the user-friend-
lines

Once tested, the prototype must very often be tuned and
tweaked to get everything right. Often it is a matter of fine
adjustments. The game needs to be flawless and balanced and
there should not be any questions left out once the players
have familiarized themselves with the rules and played the
game at least once.

As Dreyfuss reminds, the designer must have an open mind
and make every effort to integrate changes if they will improve
the product or the price picture.[...] We interest ourselves in these
matters, because they compliment the product.[207]

My game, Raccoon Wasb Rush is meant for a pre-school
age group. In the Scandinavian market this means ages 4–5
years and up. Before the test playing my assumption was that
children between ages 5-7 enjoy this game. I will discuss the
outcome of this testing session in the following.

7.5 RESULTS OF THE PLAY TESTS
Regardless of the designer's methods, there comes a moment
when the work is complete, and the effort to appraise the results
must be made. [...] This is the stage at which real growth takes
place within the artist, who becomes critic and objective appraiser
of an intensely personal effort. This is not easy, but it is the key to
improvement. It is also the mark of the professional designer.[208]

Before testing the game with the children I decided to
give the prototype to my colleagues in order for them to test
and evaluate the game. This helped to detect possible diffi-
culties that might occur when testing with the target group.
Both test playing sessions proved that the mechanics I designed really worked. Still, to be honest, some room for improvement was noticed during both play tests. Nevertheless, I now have proved that I did not fail taking all the designing steps by myself when creating the prototype. (The results of both tests can be read in the separate appendixes of this study.)

7.6 CONCLUSIONS: HOW DID THIS GAME END?

It is time to conclude the case study by finally returning to the questions expressed in the theoretical part of this thesis: Why can games be perceived as artful objects? What is the artistic value in board games of today?

Henry Dreyfuss has stated that well-designed, mass-produced goods constitute a new art form and are responsible of a new culture. I agree with his thoughts. A game, when truly new to its idea certainly is a product of a creative, artistic process.

In this case study I have focused on explaining the various stages of a development process of refining a game idea to a playable, working prototype. The story of this particular idea begun long ago, but thankfully, my master’s thesis project urged me to advance with the idea and produce a concrete, physical object which can be played and enjoyed by others. My task was to undertake all the steps of the way myself, starting from idea generation to developing a working game mechanics. The process then continued with the visualization of the game idea into a playable prototype. The design work involved aspects of industrial and graphic design. Illustration also became to play a role in this process. Finally, the game was tested with the target audience. Usually, when designing a game, the game designer has a complete team of professionals developing the idea into a prototype. The experience of being personally responsible for all the stages of this process was truly educational. However, it must be said that groups often achieve greater creative output than individuals working alone because they bring a greater sum of competen-
cies, insights and energies into the effort.[210] Arias and Fischer are of the same opinion: complex innovation processes cannot usually be performed by individuals. The design problem benefits from many people being involved in it, having different ideas regarding the problem area.[211]

Is my game prototype a result of an artistic process? Depends on how one defines the term. The prototype is beautiful to my taste. It’s useful if seen as a model for a product-to-be. It has a working game mechanics as it is, but the game has potential of being developed even further with some more complex mechanical devices. Now its future is up to the game publisher.

The work that has been done in order for this game idea to be developed into a board game sample has had many stages and involved a multitude of different skills: creativity, craftsmanship, understanding the nature of a game, lot’s of visualizing in terms of graphic design and even some commercial thinking. Thinking in this way the game prototype as an object may not be art. But according to my idea, the process behind it certainly features similar ways of working as the ones of a visual artist. Thus, board games can be seen as a form of visual art. They can be sensed with the eye, felt with the touch and played with in the mind. They create experiences. They bring people together. People want to encounter them again. From this viewpoint board games are, in fact, more than many pieces of visual art as they are, in a way, consumed over and over again by the same people. As the game is always the same as an object, yet the experience it communicates is different every time. Enjoyable. Intriguing. Entertaining. That is what art is to me as well.

What about the future of board gaming, then? I believe that traditional board gaming will continue to live as a category of toys both for children and adults a long time from now. Especially the youngest players – the preschoolers, meaning the ones between ages 3 and 6 – will be familiarized with games in situations of social interaction between children: At kindergartens, birthday parties, at home with friends and family. Thus, according to my thought many great gaming experiences will be created with a game board, some playing pawns, a die and maybe some playing cards. Even games targeted to the more mature audience, do not necessarily need the added value created by means of the new media. Often, the simplest components will do. Ultimately -
it’s not the material elements of a game that make it a brilliant one – it’s the players that do.

Finding a publisher for one’s game idea is the most satisfactory way of making a game available for the players in the world. Finding a game company that is interested in your idea is a challenge in itself. When the decision to publish has been made a list of commercial considerations await the game idea and many decisions are still to be made before it sees the daylight as a published game product. It may be altered in one way or another, it may be given a new look or an alternative theme. But the heart and soul of the game – the mechanics and rules – rarely are changed, because that is most possibly what caught the publisher’s interest in the first time.

To the final question: Will my game be published – will it see the daylight as a commercial product? Only time will tell. The journey of Raccoon Wash Rush has only begun. May the force be with my game idea.

19. and 20. The designer and her creation.
NOTES

[1] See 1.3 for a closer look on my research interest.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] This is the definition of E.M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith. See *The Study of Games*, 1972, p. 7
[15] Many definitions on the word "game" can be found in the Internet. Even thought this source is not considered very relevant by academics, I have chosen to use it anyway. The discussion and debate about board games just like is the case with digital games happens today in this digital environment. See e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Board_game (28.12.2006)
[16] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.


[27] Eskelinen, 2005, pp. 63-64


[29] Eskelinen, 2005, pp. 55, 60, 68-69


[33] Eskelinen, 2005, p. 90


http://www.stara.fi (4.2.2006)

Eskelinen, 2005, p. 25

Lecture by Eric Zimmerman given at Games & Storytelling Workshop at Medialaboratorio in Helsinki University of Art and Design, 5.-9.2.2007


Kustannustoimittajan kirja (ed.) Makkonen, Teijo, 2004, p. 20, 47


Eskelinen, 2005, pp. 9, 18-19


Eskelinen, 2005, p. 73


Eskelinen, 2005, p. 89

Ellis, 2007


[64] Annicelli, Cliff, Wonder Women of Industry – Wonder Women debate the state of today’s toy business, Playthings, December 2006

[65] Igor Gazgik’s address, On the Formalisation of the Process of Innovation, at Call for Creative Futures Seminar in Oulu, Finland, October, 10th – 11th, 2006

[66] Dr. Sandra M. Dingli, How Innovative is Your Organisation? at Call for Creative Futures Seminar in Oulu, Finland, October, 10th – 11th, 2006

[67] Timo Pärkkä, Veijo Korhonen, Aira Rusanen: Ramp-ups and other examples of value innovation creation at Call for Creative Futures Seminar in Oulu, Finland, October, 10th – 11th, 2006


[69] Ibid., pp. xi-xii


[71] Ibid., p. 31


[73] Ibid., p. 66

[74a] See Best, 2006, p. 112

[75] Lecture given by Kaj Koskinen (Innovaatiotoiminta ja tuotekehitys, TETAP-5400), Spring 2007, Tampereen teknillinen korkeakoulu in Pori

[76] Ibid.

[77] Lukkari, Jukka, Apple on mailman innovatiivisina yritys in e-magazine Tekniikka & talous, 27.4.2006

[77a] Best, 2006, p.96

[78] Jensen, 1999, p. 33


[80] Napoleon Hill, author of Think and Grow Rich

[80a] Best, 2006, p.112


[84] Ibid.


[88] How Can We Develop Inventors by Chas F. Kettering in Von Farge, Eugene K. Professional Creativity, 1959, p. 223-234

[89] Gary Carter, Chief creative officer FMX, Fremantle Media License, August-September 2006, s. 25


[90a] Best, 2006, p.104

[91] Ståhle, Pirjo, Finland Futures Research Centre, Possibilities of Creative Knowledge Capital, Call for Creative Futures Conference in Oulu,, 10.-11. October, 2006


[95] For these definitions, see Baynes, Ken, About Design, Design Council publications, London, 1976, p. 30


[98] Rosell, Gustav, Anteckningar om designprocessen, Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan, Stockholm 1990, pp. 17, 19

[99] This definition of design can be found in the following work: Baynes, Ken, About Design, Design Council publications, London, 1976, p. 29

[100] Bartlett, Ed, game designer for digital game company The Bitmap Brothers. See: So you want to be a games designer? at http://www.igda.org/articles/ebartlett_designer.php (28.12.2006) Note: Although his claim comes from the world of digital gaming, I think that this also applies to the design of traditional board games.


[110] Eskelinen, 2005, pp. 64

[112] Eskelinen, p. 98


[118] ABC Digi – Sisällöntuottajan käsikirja (ed.) Janne Mäkäläinen, p.4

[119] Ellington, Addinal & Percival, 1982, p. 20

[120] Ibid.


[122] Ellis, 2007


[124] Lecture by Eric Zimmerman given at Games & Storytelling Workshop at Medialaboratorio in Helsinki University of Art and Design, 5.-9.2.2007

[125] Ellis, 2007


[127] What is a Game Designer?


[132] What is a Game?


[136] Ibid., pp. 122–123


[138] Ibid.


[143] Huizinga, Johan, Leikkivä ihminen, yritys kulttuurin leikkiaineksen määrittelemiseksi (originally Homo ludens, 1938) (transl.) Salomaa, Sirkka. 3rd edition. WSOY, 1984, p. 20

[144] Ibid.


[146] Huizinga, 1947, p. 72

[147] See for instance The Art of Computer Game Design. Chapter What is a Game?


[152] Ellis, 2007


[154] Ibid., p. 104
[155] Ellis, 2007
[156] What is a Game?
[157] Ibid.
[158] Faidutti, Bruno, Themes & Mechanics in board games, lecture at Ropecon (Role Players Convention), 11.8.2006, Espoo Dipoli, Finland
[159] Lecture by Eric Zimmerman given at Games & Storytelling Workshop at Medialaboratory in Helsinki University of Art and Design, 5.-9.2.2007
[160] What is a Game?
[163] Ellis, 2007
[166] Koskinen, 2000, p. 43
[167] Ibid., pp. 39-40
[168] What is a Game?
[169] What is a Game Designer?
[171] What is a Game Designer?
First steps in Board Game Design. Source: http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Courses/EDTEC670/boardgame/BoardGameDesign1.html (8.1.2007)


Ellis, 2007

Ellington, Addinal and Percival, 1982, pp. 22–23

Ibid., p. 7


This is the direction of the development in Finland, see e.g. Tuotekehitys on keskiittynyt Uudellemaalle at Tekniikka & Talous (daily internet newsbulletin, edited by Tomi Savolainen), 12.1.2007

Ellis, 2007

Ibid.
[196] Koskinen, 2000, p. 112


[198] See e.g. Visual Thinking Methods for Making Images Memorable, 1988


[200] Ibid., pp. 8-9

[201] von Uchelen, Rod, Say it with pictures. Graphic communication through illustration. 1979, p. 35


[203] Ellington, Addinal and Percival, 1982, p. 29


[206] Dreyfuss, 2003, p. 3

[207] Ibid., p. 47


[209] Dreyfuss, 2003, p. 82


[209] Dreyfuss, 2003, p. 82


BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Handbook of Game Design, (ed.) Ellington, Henry, Addi- 
nal, Eric, Percival, Fred, Kogan Page, London, 1982

ABC Digi – Sisällöntuotajan käsikirja (ed.) Janne 
Mäkäläinen, Edita, Helsinki, 2001

Aktiivinen käyttöliittymä 2000 (ed.) Eva Pilke, Petri 
Lankoski: Sosiaalisuus pelissä ja digitaalisissa tiloissa, Tam- 
pereen Yliopisto, Tietokonekeskus / Hypermedialaboratario

Annicelli, Cliff, Wonder Women of Industry – Wonder 
Women debate the state of today’s toy business, Playthings, 
December 2006

Baudrillard, Jean, Seduction. (trans.) Singer, Brian, St. 

Baynes, Ken, About Design, Design Council publications, 
London, 1976

Berin, Marjorie E. Design Through Discovery – An In- 
troduction to Art and Design (5th ed.), The Dryden Press, 
1983

Best, Kathryn, Design Management. Managing Design 
Strategy, Process and Implementation, AVA Publishing SA, 
Switzerland, 2006

Carter, Gary, Chief creative officer FMX, Fremantle Me- 
dia, License magazine, August-September, 2006

Del Vecchio, Gene, Creating Ever-Cool, A Market- 
er’s Guide to a Kid’s Heart, Pelican Publishing Company, 
Gretna, 1998

Design – Pleasure or Responsibility? Selected and edited ar- 
ticles from the international Conference on Design at the 
University of Art and Design Helsinki UIAH 21-23 June 
1994, published 1995 (ed.) Tahkokallio, Päivi and Vihma, 
Susann)

Dreyfuss, Henry, Designing for people, (foreword by Tom 
Peters, preface by Earl Powell), originally published in 

Edel, Henry Jr, Introduction to Creative Design, Englewood 
Cliff, Prentice-Hall Inc. New Jersey, 1967

Eskelinen, Markku, Pelit ja pelitutkimus luovassa tal- 
oudessa, Sitra, Helsinki, 2005

Hirn, Yrjö, Leikkiä ja taidetta, WSOY, Porvoo, 1918

Huizinga, Johan, Leikkivä ihminen, yritys kulttuurin leik- 
kiaineksen määrittelemiseksi (originally Homo ludens, 1938) 
(transl.) Salomaa, Sirkka. 3rd edition. WSOY, 1984

Illusive – Contemporary Illustration and its context (ed. 
Klanten, Robert and Hellige, Hendrik), Die Gestalten 
Verlag, GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin, 2005


Koskinen, Kaj. U. Methaporic boundary objects as co-ordinating mechanisms in the knowledge sharing of innovation processes, European Journal of Innovation Management, Vol.8, No.3, 2005


Kustannustoimittajan kirja (ed. Makkonen, Teijo), Suomen Kustantajien Yhdistys, Vastapaino, 2004

Luutonen, Marketta, Tuotesuhteita, näkökulmia kulttuuriseen tuotetutkimukseen, Kuluttajatutkimus. Nyt. 1/2005


Nancy, Jean-Luc, Corpus, (trans. Susanna Lindberg), Gaudeamus, 1996

Partlett David, The Oxford History Of Board Games, Oxford University Press, 1999


Rosell, Gustav, Anteckningar om designprocessen, Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan, Stockholm, 1990

Ruth, Jan-Erik, Luovuuden kehitys elämänkaaren aikana in Haavikko, Ritva & Ruth, Jan-Erik (ed.), Luovuuden ulottuvuudet, Weilin+Göös, 1984
Rules of play. Game Design Fundamentals, Salen, Katie & Zimmerman, Eric, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004


Squares, Vicky, Illustration for Professional Communication, B.T. Batsford Ltd., Singapore, 1993

Staniszewski, Mary Anne, Believing is seeing. Creating the Culture of Art., Penguin Books, 1995

Sutton, R. (2001), Innovointi ei ole nerojen yksinoikeus. (In the article: Menestyksen hallinta, Seulamo, M, 2005, Talousläämä 43/2005

Suunnittelu – Luovaa työtä, (ed.) Lehti, Esko; Ristola, Kari, RakennusKirja, Vammalan kirjapaino, 1990


The Study of Games, E.M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, John Wiley, New York, 1972

Työhyvinvointi ja esimiestyö, (ed.) Vesterinen, Pirkko WSOY, 2006


von Uchelen, Rod, Say it with pictures. Graphic communication through illustration, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, USA, 1979
INTERNET SOURCES


Esteettisen käyttötapoja http://www.legolas.fi/jest.aitoalu/1esttai.html (9.1.2007)

First steps in Board Game Design http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Courses/EDTEC670/boardgame/BoardGameDesign1.html (8.1.2007)


Tuotekehitys on keskittynyt Uudellemaalle at Tekniikka & Talous
(daily internet newsbulletin, edited by Tomi Savolainen), 12.1.2007
http://www.tekniikkatalous.fi/

The history of Board Games.

What is a Game?

What is a Game Designer?

OTHER SOURCES

Call for Creative Futures Seminar in Oulu, Finland, October, 10th – 11th, 2006

Faidutti, Bruno, Themes & Mechanics in board games, lecture at Ropecon (Role Players Convention), 11.8.2006, Espoo Dipoli, Finland


Toy Design Department Press Kit, FIT Fashion Institute of Technology, New York (received in February, 2007)

Lecture by Eric Zimmerman given at Games & Storytelling Workshop at Medialaboratorio in Helsinki University of Art and Design, 5.-9.2.2007

Lecture by Kaj Koskinen (Innovaatiotoiminta ja tuotekehitys, TETAP-5400), Spring 2007, Tampereen teknillinen korkeakoulu, Pori department
PRESS CLIPPINGS
Cosmopolitan 1/2007, page 60
Taloussanomat 10. 10. 2000, page 6
Presso, 17.6. 2006, foreword page

GRAPHS
Graph 1. Author’s own.
Graph 2. Csikszentimilyi, see Best, Kathryn, Design Management. Managing Design Strategy, Process and Implementation, AVA Publishing SA, Switzerland, 2006
Graph 3. See Csikszentimilyi in Best, 2006. The definition of a game company’s general design process is defined by the author.
Graph 4. See Csikszentimilyi in Best, 2006. The definition of a game company’s singular design process is defined by the author.

RACCOON PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES
Raccoon on a tree stub, page 46
http://www.loomcom.com/raccoons/gallery/jpegs/raccoon1.jpg
Two raccoons, page 46
http://www.loomcom.com/raccoons/gallery/jpegs/2coons.jpg
All other images are authors own

RACCOON IMAGES IN CHILDREN’S BOOKS
Children’s book illustrations from left to right: (on page 48)

Ensimmäinen eläinkirjani, Otava, 2004 original edition

Kirkkopelto, Katri, Pikku Pesu ja iso ikävä, Lasten keskus, Helsinki, 2002


### APPENDIX 1:

**Concept Document for Raccoon Wash Rush**

**Game title:** Raccoon Wash Rush

**Game genre:** Children’s game for ages 5 years and up

**Game platform:** Board game

**Basic premise**

*(story behind the game):* It’s washing day for the raccoons. Four raccoons live at the edge of a wood with their cubs. Each of them has three cubs. The cubs have been running in the wood and playing and got their clothes all dirty. So their clothes have all been put in the washing machine. (Also see Appendix 2, Rules)

**Basic gameplay:** The task is to help them find the correct t-shirts from the washing machines by moving a raccoon on the board. By playing out a blue card your raccoon can move to a circle on the board. Along the way there are markers to pick up. A marker with a washing machine entitles you to open the machine in that colour. There are special markers too. Some of them help the players in their task and some will slow them down a bit.

*Once a player* has found a t-shirt in the right colour, he or her puts it in the basket and starts to move back home. Once the raccoon is home again, the player may dress a kit with the t-shirt before going after another one. (Also see Appendix 2, Rules)

**Main characters:** Raccoons and raccoon kits

### APPENDIX 2:

**Rules**

2–4 players

Ages 5 years and up

**Playing time:** 20 min.+

**CONTENT:**

- Game board
- 4 Washing machines in card board
- 4 Raccoon playing pieces
- 4 Laundry baskets
- 12 Raccoon kits
- 32 Markers
- 52 Cards
- 12 T-shirts in colours blue, red and green

**AIM OF THE GAME**

*The raccoons are* busy finding laundry from the washing machines. Your task is to help them find the correct t-shirts from the washing machines by moving your raccoon on the board. By playing out a blue card your raccoon can move to a circle on the board. Along the way there are markers for you to pick up. A marker with a washing machine entitles you to open the machine in that colour. There are special markers too, so watch out! Some of them help you in your task and some will slow down you a bit.
Once you have found a t-shirt in the right colour, put it in your basket and start to move back home. Once your raccoon is home again, you may dress a kit with the t-shirt before going after another one.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
Place one t-shirt of each colour into the four washing machines.

Place the washing machines in their places on one side of the game board.

Place 16 markers with the blue side up in the slots on the game board. Leave the rest in a pile with the blue side up near to the game board.

Deal out 3 pink cards to each player. These cards indicate your secret task.

Deal out 4 blue cards to each player. These cards are used for moving on the board. The rest of the cards are left in a pile near the board. These are used to replenish the set of four moving cards in your hand during the game.

Place two raccoons ready to take part of the game in front of the arrows.

WAY TO PLAY
The youngest player starts. On your turn you may:

Play a blue card from your hand and move your raccoon either vertically or horizontally along the circles on the board. You may not move diagonally.

Once you have played a blue card, take another from the pile. You should have a set of four cards in your hand at all times.

Once you come to a circle, turn around the marker in that circle.

You may keep the marker if you wish. Then replace it with another one from the pile with the blue side up. A player may keep one marker at a time. Your turn is now over. If you decide to leave the marker in the circle, then leave it picture side up.

If you land in a circle where there already is a turned marker, you may change the marker you have with this one. Your old marker then goes to the circle.

When you come to the circle in front of a washing machine (you don't need to have an exact number on your card) you may open it if you have a marker in the same colour. Show your marker and put it back in the pile. Open the washing machine and pick up a t-shirt in the colour that you need for your kit. Then close the machine. Your way home may begin on your next turn.

You may only have one t-shirt in your basket at a time.
SPECIAL MARKERS

You open the machines with the markers in the corresponding colours. There are also special markers:

The Joker. With this marker you may open any washing machine once you reach it.

Then put it back in the pile.

The Sneak Peek marker. With this one you can take a quick look in one of the machines of your choice. Use this marker right away and put back in the pile.

The Return marker. Place one of your t-shirts immediately back to the machine of your choice. Use this marker right away and put back in the pile.

The Thief marker. You may nab a t-shirt from your chosen opponent in the colour you need either from his/her raccoon or one of the kits. Use this marker right away and put back in the pile.

THE WINNER

The winner is the player who is the first who has found the right three t-shirts indicated in his or her secret cards, taken them back to the starting square and dressed the three raccoon kits.

APPENDIX 3:

Raccoon Wash Rush PLAY TEST REPORT 7.3.2007

Playing the game with children between ages: 6-7

Time: 17.40

Players: Peter (6), Celina (7), Aleksina (7), Mikaela (7)

Observer: Myself, the designer of the game

Peter enters the room first and takes a look at the packaging of the game. He recognizes the animals as raccoons and asks the meaning of the English title Raccoon Wash Rush. I tell him about the Finnish name of the game, Pesukarhun pyykkipäivä. Soon the rest of the test play group arrive, eager to play. The have been told that they are going to play a game, no other information has been given on beforehand.

Defining the aim of the game. The children are sitting around the table and having cookies and drinks. They are excited to test play. I tell the background story and read through the rules. I don’t tell them the purpose of the test, I just inform them about that the game is new. The possibility to criticize the game is left for later.

The set up for the game begins. I set up the game myself before the beginning of the game and explain the functions about each component, at the same time showing them.
The game starts. The children are seemingly excited about the game materials. The girls immediately start to play with the raccoon kits and ask how the t-shirts can be dressed on them.

The game play. The children understand very quickly about how the cards are used – how one movement card is played and their set of four cards replenished from the deck on the table. A comment is made about the number on a card. [the nr. 1] However, they seem to forget about replacing the game markers with new ones after revealing them. There is no opposition when Aleksina lifts a marker with the “return a t-shirt” function. In other words this is approved as a natural feature of the game.

A wide variation of game markers are revealed which keeps the game going in a good pace. What slows the game play down a bit are the children themselves who start to ask when they can begin playing with the raccoon kits instead of playing the game itself.

Moving on the board. The raccoons are somewhat difficult to fit into the holes of the game board, so they are replaced with ordinary game pieces. The raccoons are left to stand in front of every player on the table. Whenever a player gets a t-shirt, he or she uses the laundry basket to store it before being allowed to put it on a raccoon kit.

To my surprise the play continues with the raccoon kits. Aleksina and Mikaela start to build towers out of the kits and don’t focus on the game very much. Peter thinks that the game is disturbed by this and claims that it’s becoming boring. As soon as the girls are focused again, the game continues.

Ending the game. Peter and Celina are in the lead having already two raccoons kits dressed. The other players have only managed to get one each. The two girls seem somewhat distracted and start telling jokes to each other. However, once they have been reminded by me about the situation in the game, they start to be more interested in it again. After some 40 minutes of playing, Peter wins the game and is enthusiastic. He thinks that the game was easy to play and fun as he won.

VERDICT:

Mikaela: The best thing was dressing the kits and playing with them after the game. Aleksina agreed on this.

Peter: Opening the washing machines was the best

Celina: Also liked the washing machines the best.

All agree that the hardest was to remember what to do with the game markers, especially the joker markers.

My own experience of this test play session is that the game still needs some tweaking in order for the mechanism to be flawless and the duration of game play less than it was in this session. Also some graphical elements of the game might need some improvements. But the game works! As the designer of this game and the prototype used in the tests, I find this a relief. The test and the children have proved that game is on its way to be a potentially interesting product!
APPENDIX 4:
Raccoon Wash Rush PLAY TEST REPORT 21.2.2007

Playing the game with game industry experts

Time: 08.20

Players: Game developers Tuomas (26), Ville (29), Aija (31)

Observer: Petter (27) with whom I have played the game first.

Defining the aim of the game. Aija arrives to the place of the play test later than the other’s and asks what the aim of the game is. Tuomas, who has read the section "Aim of the game" in the rules is able to communicate the game idea very quickly.

The set up for the game begins. Tuomas, who is colour-blind, puts the washing machines in the right places and manages to do so without problems. When the washing machines are being loaded with the t-shirts, the players commonly point out that the yellow t-shirts are missing. They think this way a bit further on but eventually, the players are able to find out that there are no yellow t-shirts in the game. Tuomas has some problems in distinguishing the backgrounds of the blue and pink cards, but he still manages to do this. The game markers are shuffled and placed on the board without problems. The rest of the markers are placed in a pile next to the game board.

The game starts. The players have forgotten the aim of the game during the set up and must check it once again from the rules. All the players have also picked up just one raccoon kit. They have placed their kits each on their side of the game box. Very soon Tuomas discovers that every player should have three kits. The players each take two more kits and place them in front of themselves on the table.

The game play. The players remember the rule according to which each player can only carry one marker at a time. The first marker that is turned around is the thief. Tuomas would like to use this right away because none of the other players have t-shirts yet that could be nabbed [one should use this kind of a marker right away]. Tuomas takes the game marker anyway. The other players mention that they will not find t-shirts from the washing machines because Tuomas would immediately use the opportunity to nab a found t-shirt. At this time the observer advises the players to read the rule about the thief marker one more time. The players read this and persuade Tuomas to give the game marker away as is stated in the rules. [the rules should be more clear about that special markers should be used right away]. Next, the players say that they do not know when they can open the washing machines. [opening the washing machines could be a section of its own in the rules as it is of high importance in the game play].
Moving on the board. The players have no problems using the cards to move on the board but it turns out that Aija is the only one who has understood the permitted movements the right way. The boys have understood that one should always move either horizontally or vertically [maybe it would improve the game to let the players move diagonally too].

VERDICT:

The final judgement of my game industry colleagues is that the mechanism works and the theme is fun and different. The most interesting part of the game are the washing machines and the possibility to affect the other players gameplay. The prototype has been tested, and it works. Still, a prototype is just a model of the future game to be. In this sense, the journey of the game idea has only just begun.